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ENDEAVORS AFTER  
THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION



ARTHUR G. BEACH



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# ENDEAVORS AFTER THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION

BY  
ARTHUR G. BEACH

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## INTRODUCTION

Many people of earnest mind regard religion as almost a spent force. They feel that sociology, economics, and other practical interests have displaced religion. The study of the actual needs of society, such as housing, sanitation, adjustment of wages, the elimination of poverty, caring for the public health, stopping the waste of human life and the squandering of the natural wealth of the people; these are the objects that absorb the attention of men and women who have visions and are trying to realize them. They feel that they can get on very well without religion. It is, to them, an outworn institution. It depended for its usefulness on ignorance and superstition, but these are rapidly passing away. It rested on authority, but science has destroyed this authority. It was helped by mystery and the fear that is associated with mystery, but the light has penetrated this mystery and the fear is gone. It got its power from the general despair about this present world, coupled with alluring pictures of a better world beyond, but this despair about this present world has taken wings and men are setting to work

with confidence and energy to reconstruct society. What need, then, of religion? What contribution can religion any longer make to the general good?

It sometimes happens, however, that just when an institution appears to be crumbling, it has its real chance to serve. It is like a man who has been stripped of wealth and social prestige, and at the same time of pride and conceit and many illusions. It is just at this crisis that the man may arouse himself and see things as they really are and gather himself together and go to work in a more efficient way than ever before.

This is, apparently, the case with religion to-day. It has simply been chastened. It has been stripped of certain artificial ideas and unreal distinctions that blocked its usefulness. It has been disillusioned by the hard blows of science and progress. It may now gather itself together and offer itself to modern society as a most efficient servant. It is ready for twentieth century facts and modes of thought and life.

The one illusion above all others which has hampered religion is the illusion of peculiar origin and special privilege. The claim has always been made that religion came from above, while all other things, such as art and wisdom and science, came from beneath. These

latter issued out of life, near at hand, but the former is of special divine birth. It was, therefore, regarded as different and to be set apart from common things. Whatever else humanity possessed it had worked for. But this one treasure was simply a gift of God.

There is no claim of religion to which men have clung so obstinately as this. And it has been a strengthening and cheering faith to the world. It has been like a glimpse of a fairy world, or of a world of luxury and beauty to a child of poverty and squalor. Men and women liked to think of religion as the one wholly beautiful and heavenly thing that had never been soiled with dust and smoke. Everything else was man-made and imperfect. But this was God-given and perfect. People have held to this faith, feeling vaguely that all the poetry of life and its music and beauty, as well as its hope and healing, were bound up with it.

But now this illusion has been shattered. The study of the world-religions and of psychology has established the fact that the religious impulse is universal. Everybody is religious, just as everybody is social. Religion springs up as art springs up. It grows and changes and is subject to exactly the same influences of environment and natural genius and individual peculiarity as is the case with literature or civic customs. We get religion

as we get wisdom and skill and common sense, by thinking and working and suffering. Religion can be taught and learned and experimented with. It can be lost. It can be healthy and unhealthy. It can be sick and die. It can be abundant or meager. It can be ugly or beautiful. It varies and behaves like any other of our human possessions. We get it everywhere. We get it out of the laboratory and out of books. We get it from nature and poetry. We get it from contact with other people. We get it from all sorts of human experiences. We get it in individual ways, every man according to his temperament and experience. It bears altogether the earmarks of a human thing. Like all other human treasures, it lies scattered about the universe everywhere, and we go out and gather it and make it our own. We say of it, in the familiar words of the Book of Deuteronomy: "It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us into heaven and bring it unto us. Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us and bring it unto us. But it is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." In other words, religion has been humanized. It has been forced to become democratic. Its aristocratic pretensions have gone the way of all other aristocratic things in this democratic

age. Its humble origin has been established.

Furthermore, now that we know whence it comes, we can look at it and examine it and discover what it really is. It is no longer hidden behind vestments and mysteries and forms. It is no longer kept out of our reach by claims and dogmas and authorities. It stands out in the clear light of every day. Seen face to face, it is found to be just a certain spirit of life. It is a way of interpreting all things. It is a feeling about what happens and about ourselves and other people. This spirit of life, and this interpretation of things, and this feeling about what happens are the products of faith in God. The essential thing about this faith does not seem to be the particular form of it, but just its capacity to endue men and women with courage and good will and unconquerable confidence. This is what religion is seen to be when we are no longer afraid to look it in the face.

Now, this humanizing of religion and this defining of its character, as this character appears when it stands before us without any disguise, while it seems to some men to be equivalent to destroying it altogether, is exactly the condition of affairs that offers to religion its unique opportunity to-day.

Any man may now take it and use it according to his needs. No red tape is required.

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He need not be afraid of it. He may handle it just as he would a poem or a flower or a chemical formula. If he so wishes, he may dissect it. He may study its origin and development. He may discover for himself whether it will help him in any or all of his personal problems. He may learn whether it will apply to his work and his troubles and his temptations and his various moods. He may become familiar with all its varieties, at home and abroad, and may choose the kind of religion that seems to suit his temperament. He may widen his horizon by going out of the beaten paths of Christian travel and visiting Mohammedan mosques and Buddhist temples and Jewish synagogues. He may be himself in his religion, just as he may be himself in his politics and in his literary tastes. He may have a personal religion in the full sense of the word. Formerly it was possible to have a state religion, a community religion or a family religion. Now any man may have a religion that is as personal and as individual as are his tastes in music or art. Not only may such original spirits as Count Tolstoi speak of "My Religion," but each man may do the same. This lends a new and inexhaustible interest to religion. It seems intellectually worth while. It seems worth while also as a part of the quest of adventure. Just as

any wide-awake soul goes out into life to win a character of his own and to build his own world of ideas and impressions and convictions, so he goes out now to make his own religion. He may go anywhere for this purpose. All life is saturated with religion. "Every bush is aflame with God."

Another opportunity which religion now has is found in the fact that, inasmuch as it has got rid of its illusions, we may give it a free chance to perform its proper work in relation to morality and social affairs and the whole world of practical interests. Religion, as a spirit of life, and an interpretation of facts, and a feeling of courage and good will and confidence based on faith in God, is not committed to any economic theory. It does not stand for any of the established institutions of morality or social life as such. It is not one and the same as the present social order, or any other social order. Religion is not politics, nor is it morality, nor is it the "powers that be." It does not pretend to sanction any of these by a divine fiat. It does not claim to be an umpire, sent from heaven, in regard to marriage, divorce, the use of Sunday, competition or co-operation. All that religion asks is to be allowed to help men to a wider horizon and give them the courage and the confident spirit that will set them to work

to perfect the social order, or make them obey their consciences. It endeavors to create atmosphere. It seeks to generate moral power and social passion. Like music or art or social feeling or the wideness of the sea or the beauty of the stars, it influences men to be men and to play a man's part. It helps to make the kind of men who do the work of the world and do it well and who make goodness increase and freedom and justice a fact. In a word, it tries to make men of the religious spirit. A poet cannot help being a poet, even when he eats and drinks and casts his vote. A gentleman will be a gentleman even when he is off duty and clad in dressing gown and slippers. In the same way a religious man of the right type will be a religious man always, whether he is making money, bargaining, hiring workmen, traveling or legislating. He is a man of the religious outlook and spirit in all his activities.

It would seem that any man who wants to live well must be willing to make use of religion on these terms. He need not be afraid that it will fetter his freedom or dictate his course to him any more than that a poem of Wordsworth or an essay of Emerson will shackle him. He may be afraid of the priest and the cult and the creed and the hoary tradition, but he has no reason to fear religion. It is here simply



to serve him by inspiring him and strengthening him.

Any group of men who are trying to clean up society or to bring in the golden age must welcome such a religion. It can be of service in the social settlement. Indeed it is the spirit of the social settlement. It is the spirit that is needed to keep social workers at work. It can join the labor union, and at the same time work with the association of employers. It will not side with either, but will do both a great deal of good. Yet it is not a spirit of weak compromise and concession. It is an impulse of brotherhood and of sacrifice for what is right, no matter what it costs.

The scientific man may also welcome such a religion. It is no more at war with him and his work and his principles of investigation and his results than is a symphony or a sonnet, or a group of boys playing on the street. Music does not have to be reconciled to painting. Birds do not need to be reconciled to flowers. So science does not need to be reconciled to religion nor religion to science. The spirit of religion is just as much at home in a laboratory, as in a church. It does not pretend to tell us how the worlds were made nor how the brain works nor what thought is, nor how men were created. It lays no claim to be a re-

pository of scientific facts, nor is it committed to any scientific theory at all.

A chemist may discover anything he will, and all the text books on chemistry may have to be written over again, but this is not the concern of religion. What religion is interested in is the chemist himself. It is anxious to help him to be a man as well as a chemist. If a fellow chemist makes a discovery that compels him to revise all the ideas in his text books, religion will help him to do this without losing his temper. It endeavors to give him a fine equipoise of spirit and a noble generosity of mind. It inspires him to be honest and fearless. The more of the religious spirit he has, the more of the scientific spirit will he also have. Religion will put the right sort of atmosphere into his laboratory. It may keep him from being a mere worm burrowing in the earth, who sees no stars and none of the big sights of the world. It will lure him occasionally out of his laboratory and into the fields and into the homes of his fellow men, and thus enable him to share the great human experiences. This service religion may do for all men of science, doctors, geologists, classical students, and specialists of all kinds.

Since this is what religion is and what it aims to do it seems possible, now, to make religion speak the language of our times, as it

has not been able to do before. A missionary to Alaska discovered, not long ago, that the Bible is largely a Palestinian book, and not an Alaskan book. He could not find in it a great many texts that seemed to fit the Eskimos. They could not understand: "He shall be like a tree," for they are practically unacquainted with trees. To sow and reap would have moved them if it had read: "Sew and rip," for they know something of the latter process, but nothing of the former. Fruit and growth are metaphors they could not appreciate, for their only fruit is dried apples. Only a few of the stock texts of the Bible, such as those referring to the sea and the rocks and the stars had meaning to these men.

Religion in general has labored under this same difficulty. It has worn a mediæval armor and spoken a dead language. It has come to men of to-day who are interested in work and wages, strikes and lockouts, sanitation and housing, graft and civic honesty, life insurance and health, equality and justice, lodges, and clubs, and spoken to them of archaic interests, such as justification and sanctification, salvation, redemption as a legal privilege, sin as a theological dogma, eternity, saving one's soul, a personal devil. These are matters as far afield to-day as were the queries of pharisaical casuistry, which men

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identified with religion in Jesus' day. For it is not sin as a theological abstraction that men are interested in now, but concrete evils, such as dishonesty and vice. It is not the fall of man that bothers them, but the ups and downs of men to-day. It is not a theological way of lifting the burden of racial guilt from a man's shoulders that concerns men now, but definite and practical ways of becoming decent oneself and of helping others to do the same. It is not eternal life beyond that fills the imagination and keeps men from sleep, but right life here and now.

But since we have grown to believe that religion is not a book nor an institution nor committed to any one generation of men or any one nation, we may teach it to speak our own tongue just as truly as we teach modern speech to literature or politics. As an inspiring faith in the living God, which yields a confident and genial spirit and a hopeful and broad interpretation of life, we welcome religion into present day interests and do not hesitate to allow the old questions of an earlier day to slumber peacefully in "dusty volumes of forgotten lore," and in theological museums. If given a chance religion can speak in our tongue, so that everyone will hear it "in his own language in which he was born." It can talk of strikes and workingmen's insurance, of juvenile courts

and of graft and civic honesty. It can speak the industrial and social language of to-day.

These are suggestions of the opportunity that the chastening and sometimes painful experiences through which religion has been passing lately seem to offer. It has not been destroyed. It cannot be destroyed, as human nature cannot be destroyed. It has not been so humiliated by its experience that its usefulness is at an end. It has been humanized, made democratic and useful. The more human it is the better, because there is nothing so common in society as human nature. The more democratic it is the better, for it is common humanity that needs it. The needs of the world are human needs. And the sum and substance of these human needs is not that people shall be lifted out of life, but fitted to live. What we must have is an interpretation of life that shall keep us at work and keep us happy and good. Religion has been so reconstructed by its recent experiences that it is able to do this, if the sponsors of religion on the one hand, and the people on the other hand, will give it a fair chance.



## I

### TREASURES AND EARTHEN VESSELS

“As well imagine a man with a sense for sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, and a man with a sense for poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with a sense for conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible.”—*Matthew Arnold*.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not of ourselves.”—*St. Paul*.

Every treasure we have is in an earthen vessel. This is merely to say that all the good things we have here in this world are contained in forms and conditions that belong to this world. All that we have and are is subject to human conditions. Our treasures are not in ethereal, fairy-like vessels, suitable to Mars or Saturn, nor in vessels fit for Mt. Olympus or the Elysian Fields. They are in vessels that belong to this world and which are of the same material as that of which we ourselves are made. They are, in other words, earthen vessels.

Indeed, we cannot be said to really possess anything until we get it into some kind of a vessel. The reason we have it is because we

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have made or found ready to our hand a vessel and have got it into this vessel. The wire in which the electric fluid is caught, the book or the man or the machine in which an idea is caught, the sail or the windmill in which the breeze is caught, the piece of music or the brains and fingers of a musician in which a melody is caught, all these are vessels, each with its treasure. Nothing becomes of any real value to us until the treasure and the vessel have got together. Marriage is a treasure in an earthen vessel. Love is the treasure; the marriage covenant, the laws of mutualism on which happiness depends are the earthen vessel. The vessel is not of much value without the treasure nor the treasure without the vessel. A man is a treasure in an earthen vessel. The treasure is the soul, the spirit, the ideals, the moral passion, the aspiring mind; the earthen vessel is the habits of the man, the forms of his life, the doctrines he believes and the things he does. So our morality and our social customs, our literature and our art, our politics and our religion, each one may be described as a treasure in an earthen vessel. It is thus that they get themselves clear before the mind and grip the conscience. It is thus that they become socially efficient. Treasures in our kind of vessels are the only sort of treasures we can use. There may be other



kinds of vessels and better ones but they are of no use to us. Being "of the earth earthy," earthen vessels must contain any treasures that we can appreciate and enjoy.

But the vessels are only vessels. The vessel is never the treasure. Useful as it is it can never take the place of the treasure. Let no man who has caught a treasure in a vessel that he thinks is an especially fine one, forget to keep in mind the eternal difference between a vessel and a treasure. Let him not imagine that having made the vessel he has also made the treasure. Let him not insist that all treasures must be in just such vessels as his. As well may a man who has invented a capsule for holding quinine think that he has for that reason also invented quinine and that if you take one of his capsules without any quinine in it you will receive the same benefit as if it did contain quinine, and finally, that unless quinine is in such capsules as his it is of no value and really is not quinine at all. Let all who are interested in vessels of any kind keep this in mind. You have got hold of a small bit of treasure and put it into an earthen vessel. But to-morrow some other man may come along and make a better vessel for the treasure.

How perfectly this figure of the treasure and the earthen vessels fits the case of personal religion. Invaluable as is this treasure of re-

ligion to a man, yet it comes into his possession only in earthen vessels. The vessels are made of exactly the same materials as are all other vessels. The vessels that hold our art treasures, our treasures of morality and economics, our hopes and our longings, are all of the same material as the vessels that hold religion. There is no other material that we know anything about. Earthen material must suffice for one and all. And it is true of all alike that only as we get them into an earthen vessel or find them already there will they be able to serve us.

In the case of religion what are some of these earthen vessels? The Bible is one, the church is another, the Sabbath is a third, the priest, the creed, the ritual, the cathedral, all forms of worship and all spiritual symbols and sacraments, all religious books and ways, all prophets and teachers, our conception of God, our notion of prayer, our doctrines, our traditions,—these are all fitly described as the earthen vessels which hold the religious treasure.

Each of these is a vessel, useful, but only a vessel, and never the treasure itself. Religious faith and experience has a Book, for example, many books, indeed, but one Book pre-eminently. The treasure is in this Book, and most people are able to find it there, but the

Book is an earthen book, made like any other book, to be used like any other book, the treasure to be elicited from it as from any other book, by study, by the appreciative spirit and the honest mind. Nor is all the treasure of religion there. You can find it in other books. But if you are looking for the treasure you can certainly find some of it in this Book. Yet it is always well to remember the words put into Jesus' mouth in the Fourth Gospel, words that are aimed at the Pharisees who were inveterate students of the Old Testament, "Ye search the Scriptures because ye think in them ye have eternal life, and these are they which bear witness of me, and ye will not come to me that ye may have life." One may search the Scriptures and yet miss the treasure, and standing by the very side of the searchers as they pore over the vessel, there may be another vessel richly surcharged with the treasure. How useful the Bible is to the man who believes it is a vessel which contains a wonderfully rich measure of the treasure of religion and yet who comprehends that it is only an earthen vessel and so uses it freely and joyously and intelligently. But how barren a thing it is to the man who is a mere student of vessels as such and wants to know only of what sort of clay they are made and where the clay came from and at what period

of history the vessels were made. How unfruitful, as well, to the man who confuses the vessel with the treasure and thinks the treasure of religion was born and must forever abide there and there alone, or who imagines that any vessel, no matter how exalted a treasure it may hold, can be made of any other stuff than earthy material. It is the "power" which "is of God," not the vessel. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power may be of God and not of ourselves." Men made the Bible but they did not make religion. They found religion, as they found all other things, already existent in the universe, a rich gift of God, to be hunted for and gathered and put into vessels such as they could make and use. We may think religion is more valuable than some other treasure, but no matter how valuable the treasure we can never get it into any other kind of vessels than earthen ones. The Bible is an earthen vessel and we do not honor it by trying to put it into a class by itself, as though it were made of some other stuff. We only create confusion and impede the progress of truth. We cast a veil of unreality over religion.

We may say just the same of all our vessels in which the religious treasure is held. The church has much of religion in it, but it is, of course, only an earthen vessel. All its forms

and politics and faiths are earthen vessels and came into being by purely human methods. Priests, prophets, and all holy men are earthen vessels. They come by their office as do kings and doctors and all other honest men who hold any office. Our conception of God is a religious treasure of the highest value to the world. It means much that we feel we can say "Our Father." But this conception is not the treasure itself, it is not God Himself, it is an earthen vessel. Men have put into it through many centuries their thought and their hopes and their imaginations and their hearts and their growing experience. Prayer is an earthen vessel. Salvation is an earthen vessel. Immortality is an earthen vessel. For these are forms of faith, forms in which treasures that humanity will not willingly lose have been clothed. Yet a form can never be anything more than a form.

Now, if a man were to start out to-day in search of a personal religion, if he were a thoughtful man who knew what people believe in general to-day, what wiser course could he pursue than to keep in mind as he went this figure of the treasure and the vessel? The vessels in which he will find the treasure already contained will be not merely such traditional and time-honored treasures as the Bible and dogmas and church forms, but they will

be also the general ideas and beliefs and knowledge of his day as related to the universe as a whole. If he is really a man of to-day and not of yesterday then the only vessels that he can use will be these distinctly modern ones. If he thinks as his contemporaries think, then the personal religious treasure which he shall find and make his own must be within forms of thought and belief which he can firmly and freely hold. He can make no use of what people believed about the earth and man back in Abraham's day or in Bunyan's day or in St. Augustine's day or even in the days of his own father and mother. But what people think now, or know now, the intellectual currents of the times, these and these alone can be his earthen vessels.

To-day we think of God as always in the world, doing everything in conformity with law, not working special miracles in anyone's behalf, such as causing the sun to stand still until a man has finished his day's work, not appearing by startling signs in a man's life, such as a Burning Bush, but manifest in all the life of the world at all times and causing his sun to shine and his rain to fall on all alike. If a man is going to have a personal religion it must rest on this idea and not on ideas that used to be held but are not held any longer. He can make no use of that old ves-

sel of religion, the conception of a hard and fast line between the natural and the supernatural, but his vessel will be the conception of a spiritual universe all through. There is no purely natural and there is no supernatural. There is no "natural law in the spiritual world" and no "spiritual law in the natural world" for him, because to his mind there are not two worlds at all, nor two ways in which things are done, but "One God, one law, one element." This new conception of a wholly spiritual world dominated always by law must be his vessel. When he reads of the faith of the Psalmist and other Bible worthies that God will literally interfere in their behalf, the supernatural dipping down into the natural for the moment to care for certain individuals, he must say, "This is not a conception that I can use, but I can appreciate, nevertheless, the faith of these men," and guided by their spirit he can learn to discern in the universe that spirit of goodwill which will enable him to say with Whittier:

"I know not where his islands lift  
Their froned palms in air,  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his love and care."

In a similar manner the notion of salvation is a vessel that must be somewhat altered for

the man of to-day. The changed spirit of the man who is "saved" is the treasure. The dogma of salvation is the vessel. What we know to-day about the way in which character is formed and changed compels us to think somewhat differently about the vessel of salvation from the way in which Bunyan portrays it in his "Pilgrim's Progress." Men are not saved in a moment, by an inrush of divine power from without, a supernatural transformation in the twinkling of an eye. But men are saved, rather, by the slow deposit of power within them through long years of effort, by the help of God. Salvation is to us a thing of character rather than a state of intellectual belief. Our new conceptions in this matter make a new vessel for the old treasure.

These are but a few examples of the intellectual conditions which must furnish the earthen vessels in which a man of to-day can put and hold his personal religion. This same transformation must go on in all the vessels of religion. Indeed, we may say that this same change must transpire in regard to social conditions. The social ideals of any age constitute earthen vessels for religion. Time was, for example, when a man could not have a personal religion if he built a fire or carried a stick of wood or ate a hot dinner on Sunday.



This social ideal absolutely conditioned religion. But this idea of Sunday has somewhat changed and it is possible now for a man to have a warm and rich personal religious life and yet take a walk on Sunday and read a novel and make a social call on his neighbor.

It was true formerly, also, that one could not be genuinely religious and yet go to a theater or play cards. The common view of these and kindred things was such that to indulge in them against the common conscience and one's own conscience utterly destroyed the very mood of religion. But this has changed. The old vessel is no longer of use. A new conscience has come into existence in these matters and this new conscience is the vessel now for personal religion.

But it was also possible some years ago for a man to drive sharp bargains, accept secret rebates in business, follow the brute law of the struggle for existence, and discharge his conscience by an occasional check for missions to the heathen, and yet be a religious man, undisturbed in his devotions, praying with the fervor and satisfaction of a Daniel with his windows open to the east. But this is no longer the case. The new morality and the new business ethics and the new social vision and conscience make it impossible for a man to be religious and yet unsocial and hard of heart

and sharp in his practices. The old vessel will not contain the treasure of modern religion.

Such is the application of treasures and vessels to religion. The vessel is necessary but the treasure is the thing. We can make vessels out of whatever material the times bring to our hand. We may use wood, stone, steel, marble, whatever the region where we are furnished. A man who believes that the earth is flat can have a personal religion and so can a man who believes it is round. A man who believes that miracles are liable to happen any moment and prays that they may happen can have his religion and a man who does not expect them and does not want them to happen can have his religion. The modern man must insist on his right to make his own vessels. He must not fear that because the old vessels are not useful to him neither is the treasure they contain. The vessels which the science and the temper of our day create are well adapted to hold the treasure of personal religion.

## II

### THE ENRICHMENT OF FAITH BY EXPERIENCE

“Act the good and you will believe it. The conviction that the world is moving towards great ends of progress will come surely to him who is himself engaged in the work of progress.”—*Felix Adler*.

“Not mine to look where cherubim  
And seraphs may not see,  
But nothing can be good in Him  
Which evil is in me.

The wrong that pains my soul below  
I dare not throne above;  
I know not of his hate—I know  
His goodness and his love.”

—*Whittier*.

There is one of the Old Testament prophets who tells us in a very pathetic way how he came to have his religious faith. This prophet is Hosea. In his message there is the note of stern condemnation of sin and of assured punishment which we expect from a Hebrew prophet. But there are also promises of divine pity as beautiful and winning as one can find anywhere in all the ranges of literature. This commingling of warning and assured compassion, however, does not mark Hosea's teach-

ing as especially noteworthy. That element is supplied by the bits of autobiography the reader finds there and which he can put together. This autobiographical fragment is, briefly, as follows: There had been in Hosea's home in Galilee a domestic tragedy. His wife had proven unfaithful. He had at once put her away in anger, as custom allowed and encouraged him to do. In ordinary cases this would have ended the story. But one fact remained. Hosea found he loved her still. He wrestles with this love "that will not let him go." At last he goes to his wife, forgives her, and takes her back into his home. Even yet there is nothing especially noteworthy in this chapter from a man's life. This had happened before in the world's history, and has happened since. Other men have been magnanimous enough to play the same rôle. But the fact which lifts the whole story into a novel and interesting light is this:—Hosea wrought this experience into his religious faith. After that it governed his message to his fellow Hebrews.

This was his state of mind and his problem. Here he was a wronged man mingling love with justice and able to forgive and restore. And here he was, again, preaching to his people who were unfaithful to their God, that God had but one message to them and that was

punishment. The contradiction of it struck him with irresistible force. The blasphemy of holding up to his people a God who was not as good as he was himself smote upon his soul. He went out and announced to his hearers a new gospel, in accord with his own experience. He had already embodied his earlier teaching in the names of a son and a daughter. The son was "Lo-Ammi," "not my people," and the daughter "Lo-Ruhamma," "unpitied." Now he adds, "It shall come to pass that in the place where it was said 'Lo-Ammi—Ye are not my people,' it shall be said 'Ye are the sons of the living God. . . . Say to your brother, 'Ammi, my people,' and to your sister, 'Ruhamma, pitied.' And again 'There shall be a day when ye shall call me, 'Ishi—my husband, and no longer Baali—my master.'"

Out of this tragedy of victorious domestic love came Hosea's gospel of the divine compassion. This addition to the religious faith of the Old Testament was the result of a man's pondering over his own personal experience.

Now, I believe that Hosea was entirely right in reasoning that if he could pardon his wife, God could and would pardon Israel. That is a valid argument. God must be as big and tender, as capable of gracious deeds, as any man, or else he is not much of a God. Jesus used this same line of reasoning. He said

to His disciples, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give good gifts to them that ask him." If a human father, an ordinarily successful father, will answer the requests of his children, is it not likely that God will do the same? Again Jesus asks "Which of you that is a father?" This is the same argument that Hosea used. The reason Jesus felt so sure that God is trustworthy, bent on doing the right thing for men, was, I believe, because he felt that he himself was trustworthy, bent on doing right, and devoted to humanity. The feeling of brotherliness in his own heart was his warrant for being sure that in God's heart was a feeling of fatherliness. It is natural for a good man to believe that God is good. He is driven to it for very shame, by his own humility. A generous man is ashamed to worship a vindictive God. He is either ashamed of the vindictive God or he is ashamed of himself for being better than the God he worships. Every sweet and lovable quality in any of us is a warrant for the existence of at least as good qualities in God. If one has ever felt himself absolutely trustworthy, if he has felt, for example, that no possible temptation could make him betray the trust of a child, then he surely is warranted in believing that God is to be trusted. He

can say with Whittier, "I know that God is good." Whittier was a good man, and he knew other good men, and he knew Jesus, and on the strength of these facts he threw aside the "iron creeds" of his day and openly rejoiced in the God of "The Eternal Goodness." So every devoted father or mother testifies to the fatherhood of God. Every honest man bears witness to the honesty of God. Every hater of a lie adds to the certainty that God is true.

As a matter of fact, is not this the way in which our religious faith was born and grew, and is not this the way in which it is being enriched in our own time?

All along the pathway of the history of religion are these monuments marking the place where some great soul wrought his experience into his own religious faith first, and then into the faith of the world. Some man who was forceful, strong, achieving, said "God must be strong," and as a result we all worship the God of whom we say "All things are possible." Again, some man with a passion for righteousness in his soul put there by God himself, enters the temples and market places of his day where the God of power alone is worshiped, and cries out, "God is just, only the worship of honest men is acceptable to him." And men begin to leaven their notion of the strong God with the idea of righteous-

ness. Or again, as in the case of Hosea, some tender, magnanimous man, by a pure deduction from his own character and experience, breaks in upon the worship of the God of mere justice and measure and gives us the God who is "full of compassion and gracious."

In this way, perhaps, Moses, himself a natural lawgiver, judicial, law-loving and law-abiding, announces the God of the moral order. Isaiah, a man of wide vision into whose thinking contemporary events had thrust the idea of a God whose activities are not confined to one people, proclaims the God of all men. Paul, a democratic man, preaches a democratic God to the religious aristocrats of Israel.

This same process of building our growing experience into our faith is going on to-day. The canny Scot of Maclaren's "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush" changes his "Jehovah" into "Our Father," after his own heart has been broken and he has been led to forgive. The mothers of the world have voted out of existence the doctrine of infant damnation. They felt that if that were true then every tender feeling in the human heart is a lie. No amount of tradition or hoary authority can make the world's tenderness believe it. In a similar way the growing sense of brotherhood, of fair play, of the idea of the square deal for every man, has simply pushed overboard



the notion of election. On what authority do we deny the Mohammedan idea of heaven? Is it not because we feel that already, here, in this imperfect world we can do better than that? The average home is better than the Mohammedan heaven. On what ground do we modify some of the New Testament descriptions of heaven? Is it not because the thought of a heaven whose chief occupation is idleness and adoration with no growth or service does not appeal to us who feel that here on earth we have attained a higher conception of life? To the author of the Book of Revelation life meant poverty, oppression, tears, and so he pictured heaven as merely an escape from these. But to us, to-day, to whom life here has a different meaning, life there must also have a new meaning. We boldly incorporate our modern social conscience and civic idealism into our dreams of heaven.

Is not this one of the needs of a great many people to-day in the matter of religious faith? If one regards his faith as a fixed thing that has come into the world and into his own life from some outside source, then new knowledge, new experiences, new insights, are sure to destroy it. But if one has a fluid, vital notion of his religious conceptions, then all that becomes a part of him will become a part of his religion. As Tennyson wrought the death of

Arthur Hallam, not only into his poetry, but into his religious faith, so all the wealth of science and all the treasures of human experience can be made a part of what the modern man thinks and believes. If one cannot do this, then either he must keep his mental growth and his new experience of life away from his religion, to the detriment of both his life and his religion, or he must see his religion slip from his grasp.

Hosea might have said, "I have been taught that God punishes iniquity unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate him. He is an implacable avenger; yet I have loved enough to forgive and restore. Away with such a religion and such a God." This might have meant the end of personal religion for Hosea. But he had enough mental grasp and enough sturdy faith in himself and the world he lived in to widen his idea of God so that his new experience and his new insight might find room there. He demanded a bigger and better God and assumed that his demand was answered.

This is what we must all do. We cannot afford to be bigger and better than the God we worship. But let us not for that reason abandon our God and our religion. All that is in us of goodness, realized or only in ideal visions, must be in God. Let us not hesitate to put it there. God, for our thought and

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faith, is not "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," even as he was not for Hosea. We are to build anew, after every experience, our thought of God.

### III

## RELIGION AND THE HUMAN HEART

"My flesh and my heart fail me, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forevermore."—

*Psalms.*

"Then my heart said 'Give o'er,  
Question no more, no more;  
The wind, the snowstorm, the wild hermit flower,  
The illuminated air,  
The pleasure after prayer,  
Proclaim the unoriginated Power"—*Alice Cary.*

"I had rather feel compunction than know the definition thereof."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

The hearts of men and women must have their rights. It is not enough to feed their bodies and keep them well, nor to satisfy their curiosity or their desire to have a reasonable theory of life. But the heart must also be fed. Besides laboratories and encyclopaedias we need opportunities for love and friendship.

In religion, as in all life, the heart must have its way. It is not enough that religion shall speak to the mind and satisfy its desire for a solution of the mystery of life, nor that it shall touch the conscience and stimulate a man to good works. Besides furnishing us something to think about, religion must give us an object of love and afford us comfort and heal-

ing in suffering and a response to our hunger for companionship. "The common people heard Jesus gladly." I imagine that was largely because his religious teaching fed their hearts. So "their hearts burned within them." Often the most perfectly appointed religion, correct in worship and faultless in its appeal to the mind, fails because the heart is forgotten. It is all like "a painted ship upon a painted ocean." A bathtub or a mudhole with a shingle for a boat is better than that. It takes more than a perfect piece of machinery to satisfy a human being. I suppose that was one trouble with the Garden of Eden. A perfect garden will do for roses or cabbage, but not for men and women. People will not "stay put." The spontaneity of the heart and its unexpectedness must have free play. For this reason no merely scientific thing, no mere statement of facts and no series of performances will ever do for a religion. Algebra is a good thing, but algebra will not do for a religion, for it will not help us when the chill of the world's mysteries strikes our hearts. The Ten Commandments alone will not do for a religion for they have no word about grief or joy or the passion of enthusiasm. Science gives us a wonderfully fascinating picture of a world of beauty and order, but beauty and order are not the only demands of the soul.

The soul wants compassion and 'friendliness and peace.

I find it very illuminating to think over the different ways in which this imperiousness of the human heart has asserted itself in the history of religion. A great many influences have been at work building the forms and doctrines of religion. But the heart has always been one of the most potent of these builders. If a form of worship has not appealed to the heart, people have found one that did. If a doctrine has had no message to the heart, but only to the head or the conscience, people have substituted one that spoke the fuller message.

Back in the early ages, for example, there grew up a belief in Purgatory. Now, Purgatory is a word of the human heart. It is a protest of the human heart. The church was teaching that everything was settled as to a man's destiny when he died. Those who had faith went to heaven. Those who had not went to hell. It was very simple and clear-cut. But people were dying who did not have faith, and who perhaps, some of them at least, were not all that could be desired in other respects. But, nevertheless, other people loved them and they loved other people. One was a son, perhaps, and he had a father and mother who loved him. Another was a husband and his

wife loved him. Others were friends, neighbors, companions of a lifetime. The church in every case said, "No hope. The thing is settled. A great gulf is fixed forever between these men and heaven. No bridge there. No boat and no ferryman." But the hearts of fathers and mothers and lovers cried out against this. They said, "It is not so. It cannot be so. It shall not be so." And their hearts went to work and began building. What they built was Purgatory. Purgatory is thus a creation of the human heart. It means that there is something which love can still do for a man after he is dead. Death does not mean that a man can do no more for his friend, or a father for his son or a wife for her husband or a husband for his wife. Death does not mean that a person we have "loved and lost" is lost forever if he dies without faith. There are masses to be said for his soul. There are prayers for the dead. By continuing to love one who is dead, we can still serve him and help him to pass out of Purgatory into Paradise.

Now, I do not say, of course, that this doctrine of Purgatory is not crude, nor that priests have not been able to so develop and manipulate it as to take advantage of it for their own profit. I do not say it is true, although I am not able to say it is not true. My

point is merely that here is a striking instance of the imperious demand of the human heart at work upon religion. The heart, in this doctrine of Purgatory, is insisting that religion shall satisfy it.

Another instance of this same truth is found in the Confessional. The heart demands confession. We want to confide in somebody. We are like children who will burst if they cannot run and tell somebody an important piece of news. We are like criminals who will go mad if they keep a dark secret to themselves. "Tell it to God," said the church. "Yes, but God is so remote, and he seems somewhat unreal. We cannot see him. We cannot understand what he says in answer to our confession. Give us something a little more tangible and real and near at hand. In a word, let us have something human." So the hearts of the people who sin and suffer and cry out for the assurance of forgiveness and the sense of some one else bearing with them their load began to build something that would meet this need. Who can accomplish this purpose so well as the priest? And there have always been enough good priests with kindly faces and brotherly hearts and entire trustworthiness and practical wisdom to make the priest seem the proper man for the confession, and the church the proper place for the Confessional.



We Protestants are not accustomed to the Confessional, and are suspicious of it. Yet we surely will not deny that to many a devout adherent of our sister church, it is the most real and satisfying thing in his religion. I have no doubt it will last many years. Perhaps it will be modified and become part of Protestantism. Indeed, the Immanuel Movement, from one point of view, is a modernized and Protestantized form of the Confessional. Day after day men and women come to those who have established these soul-clinics, and as the first step in their treatment are encouraged to make a clean breast of some sin or to unburden their souls of some hidden sorrow that has been eating out their lives. This confession is recognized to be a large factor in their healing. No man can be well with an unbearable burden on his soul.

A third example of this human heart-hunger and its demand upon religion is found in the worship of the Virgin Mary. This custom sprang directly from the people and their needs. It was not the priests nor the theologians who suggested or developed it. They were horrified at it at first. They fought it and tried to convince the people that it was unreasonable and wrong. But the people persisted, especially the pagans of Europe who were converted to Christianity. The most

loved and serviceable of the gods these Pagans had to give up were the house-hold gods, the gods of the hearth and the home, near to them, friendly and intimate, and often feminine. But their Christian teachers taught them to believe in and worship one God who dwelt in the heavens. He seemed to them far-away and much too august to be directly approached in a man's everyday troubles. They felt that they could hardly expect the ponderous machinery of the universe to be set turning for their benefit, especially in the minor concerns of life. But a woman, a motherly heart, that was different. So what more natural than that these people should select Mary, the mother of Jesus, the "highly favored among women," to be their model of sweet and gracious womanhood, and to be worshiped as "queen of heaven" and "mother of God?" What more inevitable than that most of the warm, tender, homely, human aspects of the religion of the middle ages should gradually gather about her name?

How plainly this illustrates the fact that the hearts of men will not be denied in religion? Make God exclusively masculine; set him afar off; make him too imperial for the common sorrows and needs of everyday living, and the hungry hearts of men and women and children will not and cannot endure it. They will fash-

ion a host of angels who shall minister to them and carry their messages to God and bring back his word to them. They will make saints of the good men and women of the past and pray to them and have images made of them. They will take the mother of Jesus and make a deity of her, to forgive their sins. They will dedicate their poems to her and consecrate their houses in her name. They will make her the presiding genius of their homes. The feminine, the human, the tender, the sympathetic, the approachable, the household gods, the fire on the hearth, the mother at the bedside, all these must be in the God who is to be worshiped, for the hearts of the people demand it.

Surely a great difficulty in our modern notion about God is that it does not speak clearly and warmly enough to the human heart. We say that God is everywhere, not in any one place. He is interfused in all things. He is the power that makes the grass grow in the spring and the tides ebb and flow in orderly sequence. He is the breath of life. He eludes the senses. He is the law of the universe and the power that makes for righteousness. All this is very impressive and very satisfying to the intellect and we congratulate ourselves on our achievement. But who will deny that this notion of God hardly satisfies the heart? The heart cries out, as Job did long ago, "Where

is he that I may find him and appear before him and plead my cause?"

I am confident that we shall yet be able to shape our modern God into a God who shall satisfy the heart as well as the head. But we have not done so yet. So, meanwhile, the majority of the human race still have as their God a fatherly, benevolent, definite God whom we can call by name. Let the heart have its way in religion. Doubtless it is often wrong. It is usually vague and lacks the fine precision of the intellect. The heart is not preëminently scientific. It requires education. It has to be wooed into reasonableness. But let it say its word always. Let it pour into religion the warm blood of actual passion and help to make it in the fullest sense human.

"I say to thee, do thou repeat  
To the first man thou mayest meet  
In lane, highway or open street,  
That he and we and all men move  
Under a canopy of love  
As broad as the blue sky above."

## IV

### THE IMAGINATION AND RELIGION

“Poetry is more philosophical than philosophy and more historical than history.”—*Aristotle*.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”—*Jesus*.

We are very apt to regard the imaginative world with its gossamer creations as of no substantial value. For we are all under the sway of science to-day. Our temper is one of cold analysis. We are glad to be amused by Mr. Barrie and his rich fancies; we enjoy the genius of our elder and later makers of airy nonsense; but we say, or at least feel, that truth can be gained only by the methods of the laboratory and the painstaking tests of scholarship.

This prevailing mood has been of great service in sifting the true from the false; it has been in the interest of clear thinking, but is it not possible that as an attitude of mind it has been a stumbling block to many and a cause of actual mental impoverishment?

This seems certainly to have been the case in the matter of religion. We have pursued the imaginative elements in religion and run them

down and hunted them out until for many people there is nothing left. Everything has been eliminated except a number of facts, historical, logical, scientific, but dead. There is no imaginative spirit to move upon them and make them live. We have forgotten that the imagination is the illustrator among the faculties. It is the artist, the image-maker. Imaginative conceptions are pictured truth, pictured thought, pictured impressions. Goemetry is an interesting and comprehensible branch of mathematics to some, because it is a picture science. It is a science in which the imagination can play a large part. Poetry is made real and none the less truthful because it is dependent on the aid of the imagination of the reader.

When we read "Crossing the Bar" the imagination is stirred to action and we hear the sound of evening bells, muffled across the waters; we see the bar and the outgoing tide, and we picture the aged poet, gray and beautiful, saying his farewell. All experience is real to us and substantial, not in the degree in which it is free from imagination, but in the degree in which the creative fancy makes it live. Religion is a meaningless thing to us and fades into nothingness when we banish the imagination from it. Reduce it to formulas, equations, laws, and it has no vitality left.

Its ideas were shaped in the minds of men who were rarely gifted with the creative imagination and these ideas can be comprehended and practically used only by those who are similarly gifted to some degree, and who recognize that religious ideas are of this nature.

Is there any endowment which aids one more effectively in appreciating the Bible than the imagination? One needs to know something about the Bible, to be sure. He needs also to be in some degree of sympathy with its religious experiences. But these alone will not unlock the Bible to him. To the scientific apparatus and the native hunger of the soul for God must be added the kindled imagination.

How unimaginative and hence how unrewarding our reading of the Book of Genesis often is? They were imaginative men who wrote these chapters, and the material they used was the offspring of the rich creative fancy of the Semitic peoples. These writers were poets, some of them at least. They felt that God had made the world and that he had a purpose in it. They were sure that sin was wrong and hateful to God and harmful to men. They let their imaginations play upon these and other ideas and convictions. They wrought their faith into the form of these racial and national tales. They created in this way a group of pictures of the days of crea-

tion and primitive life that are wonderful pictures.

It is surely a very stupid thing to read these stories without remembering their imaginative origin. But if we approach the creation stories, the Garden of Eden, the episode of Cain and Abel, the tower of Babel and the rest, remembering what they are, and with our own imaginations kindled, matching fancy with fancy, they become rich and rewarding. But before these chapters the man of facts and facts alone, the prosaic soul who has banished his imagination as a childish thing, is like a deaf and blind man by the sea.

The Psalms again are full of the flowers of creative fancy. God is pictured as a bird with sheltering wings or as a cooling cloud in the heat of the day or as a man on whose bosom we may recline, or as a shepherd. The imagination has pictured the relation between men and God in every possible way. What absurd ideas we get if we read the Psalms and forget the imagination! What utterly wooden notions we get by reading Daniel, Jonah and the rest of the imaginative fiction of the Bible as we would measure a piece of cloth or weigh a pound of beef! Even the prophets, serious men that they were, did not hesitate to call in the imagination to lend force and the picturesque quality to their sermons. The New Testament



is highly colored with the work of the imaginative artists. Jesus himself is "fancy's child." His creative imagination has wrought the gospel into flowers and sheepfolds and seed and soil, and mercantile transactions and the relations of fathers and sons, and into all the richness of the world about us. One of the chief sources of his power is the fact that he is a master of creative fancy. Is it not possible that one of the things Jesus had in mind when he said, "Unless ye become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," was the fact that the responsive and creative imagination which is so fresh and spontaneous and irrepressible in childhood, is indispensable to the man who wishes to comprehend the gospel?

How interesting it is to note with what eagerness the creative fancy has seized upon Jesus himself? All that he was and said and did has been surrounded with a halo of poetry. A loving and appreciative and reverent fancy has taken hold of his birth and his boyhood and his family life and his life with the disciples and all that concerned him, and has wrought it into beautiful and helpful pictures and songs and stories and other imaginative forms. In this way the life of Jesus has been made into a continuous ideal for daily living. He sat at the table with the disciples and broke bread

with them and passed the cup to them. By the help of the imagination this has become a sacrament, a symbol, which feeds millions with the bread of life. The Lord's Supper depends for its efficacy upon the imagination of the disciple, his imaginative response to its appeal. By means of it one who has a quickened imagination is able to enter into fellowship with the Master and the first company of disciples and with the ever growing company of Christians throughout the centuries. But one who lacks this imaginative key finds the Sacrament either barren to him, a meaningless form, or else he is led into a stupid literalness which spoils the sacrament by hardening it into a dogma. "This is my body,"—what can that mean to anyone whose imagination is not alive? In a similar way the poverty of Jesus, the cross of Jesus, his baptism, the calling of the twelve, his trial and death, have all been touched and enriched and made practically serviceable by the help of the imagination. Jesus appeals to the artist in all human souls as does a sunrise or a burst of music or the sight of the sea. And while this artist in men may have taken many liberties with the facts, as poets and artists always do, and are allowed to do, yet who will deny that their work has resulted in putting the Christ-facts into forms that have made them wonderfully

stimulating and practically useful to the world? For every one who can enjoy and utilize only the scanty residue left when the analytic mind has finished its work there are thousands to whom that is a poor feast, but to whom all that concerned Christ, if transformed into imaginative conceptions, is a rich and satisfying food.

The truths of Christianity have also been treated in this same imaginative way. Jesus himself began it, for he was no logician stating syllogisms, but an artist painting pictures. Truth came to him in a poetic form and he spoke it in that way, much to the confusion of the literalists then and since. Paul and others followed along this same way. They clothed the teachings of Jesus in imaginative forms for their generations. Paul, for example, puts the social teaching of Jesus into the form of bodily relations, "as the body is one and hath many members." How his fancy plays with the idea of baptism and death and resurrection and life with Christ! We have become so accustomed to these imaginative plays of Paul's that we forget their real character and regard them as fixed dogmas. How much wiser for us to accept them for what they are, and if we find it more useful and adapted to our modern ways of thinking, to reclothe them in other forms of imagination? Indeed, much

light is thrown upon the whole history of Christian doctrine by remembering how large a place imagination has had in the formation of dogmas and symbols and forms. Apply this idea to redemption, salvation, atonement, the trinity, the resurrection, and other doctrines, and what a flood of light is thrown upon them? How the man who is disposed to criticise them is disarmed! How the wooden literalist sees the ground for literalism crumbling beneath his feet! How the troubled seeker after truth finds, as it were, "scales falling from his eyes!" If imagination is an indispensable aid to the man who works with the stars or the flowers or in the laboratory or in any field of science, is it not equally helpful to the man who is threading his way through the mazes of Christian history?

The crowning conception in religion is God. If there is any particular in which we are helpless without the imagination it is in our efforts to make God real and practically useful. An equation is useful in mathematics; a formulated law is useful in science; and a syllogism is useful in logic; but neither an equation nor a law nor a syllogism will do for a God. These bare conceptions must be worked over by the imagination before they will do for religion. It is when the bare idea of God as Power, or World-ground or Absolute, or Law

of Cause and Effect, or any other, is imaginatively transformed into King or Judge or Shepherd or Father, or any other term of personal relation, that religion becomes alive. It is not in spite of, but because of the rich poetic imagery of the Bible's portrayal of God and his relations to men that it is the never-failing source of religious inspiration. It is only when the idea of God has been imaginatively treated that men can pray. It is only then that religion becomes a personal life. It is a God who talks to men in daily life who is real enough to live with in intimate personal associations. It is only of such a God that one can say "I am not alone, for my Father is with me."

Before the day of the spread of the scientific spirit men often made religion ridiculous by failing to recognize the imaginative fact for what it really is. They insisted on identifying a mental picture of God or of some other religious idea or force with the absolute fact, and they quarreled with great heat over these mental pictures. In this way they offended men of a scientific turn of mind and often made them enemies of religion. At the same time they narrowed the range of their own religious thinking and dried up the fountains of their personal religious life. But now, on the contrary, with the full glory of the

scientific mood upon us we are destroying the work of the imagination in religion as ruthless lumbermen cut down our forests. Every religious conception is carefully analyzed and the imaginative element thrown aside. What is left is very scientific and correct in every particular but there is no life in it. There is nothing in it for a man to flee to from the harshness and sins and sorrows of life. The only way in which he can use it is either to reclothe it in the old imaginative forms or else to make new ones. This is what we are to insist upon doing for the sake of our own religious life. We are to recognize the imaginative elements in religious ideas for exactly what they are, gladly thanking science for its work of analysis. This careful work of science will prevent our making some of the mistakes of earlier days. But when we have recognized this, then let us mix in again our imaginative forms and colors. For religion, as a life, as a mental world on which we can feed and into which we can enter with joy is a poetic achievement. The prosaic lawgiver and moralist can hammer the stuff of religion into severe and stinging ethical precepts. The scientist can cut it to pieces and tell us what it is made of and whence it came and can label its various factors. But at the last it is only the poet, the seer, the man of spiritual vision, the man

who has the picture-mind, who can work it up into shape for practical use.

Many a man to-day, under the influence of the scientific temper, has temporarily lost his religious life. He can get it back not by insisting on keeping his science and his religion in separate compartments of his mind, nor by throwing overboard his science, but by the simple mental act of recognizing the rights of the imagination in his religion. Let him not be too wise and scientific to be imaginative. For it is imagination that can give life to his religion. It is imagination that can give him a God who is not a philosophical postulate merely nor a force nor a law, but one to whom he can pray and with whom he can walk.

## V

### WHAT STRENGTHENS FAITH

“I have sought to keep the faith; faith in a power in the Universe good enough to make truth-seeking wise, and strong enough to make truth-telling effective; faith in the rise of man, faith in the gradual evolution and ultimate prevalence of right reason among men.”—*Andrew D. White.*

I once had a conversation with a very devout and earnest man who believed that men to-day, if they had faith enough, might have that gift of tongues which is alluded to in the New Testament. After he had argued with me for some time about the matter, showing how it is possible for one to gain this gift, and telling me of various people who have it, and that every earnest Christian should endeavor to gain it, I asked him, “Suppose one might acquire this gift of tongues, of what practical value would it be?” I was somewhat in the mood of little Peterkin. “‘But what good came of it last?’ quoth little Peterkin. ‘Why that I cannot tell,’ quoth he. ‘But ’twas a famous victory.’” I had really supposed, however, that my friend had some good reason why he was so intent upon acquiring this gift. I imagined that he had related it in his mind to



foreign missions, and had visions of young men and women going into foreign lands, and at once addressing the natives in their own tongues, without the weary experience of acquiring the language. What a welcome relief that would be to the young missionary to China? But not at all. His mind was running in an entirely different direction. This was his reply: "Oh, it would be such a help to faith." "Whose faith?" I asked. "Oh, everybody's," he answered, "the faith of the man who had the gift and of all who heard him, for it would prove that the Bible is true, that our Christianity is not a falsehood, but of divine origin, not man-made, but God-made."

I presume that is a quite general way of thinking about such matters and it seems at first sight a very natural way to regard faith and truth. Shall we believe in the Ten Commandments? Only if they are written with the finger of God, on stone tables, and given amid clouds and smoke on the mountain top. If a message is really from God, let the shadow move backward on the dial, or let there be dew everywhere else but none on Gideon's fleece, and again, let there be dew on his fleece but nowhere else. That makes our faith strong.

But, after all, what are the things that a man really needs his faith strengthened in? I mean a man who is battling with the practi-

cal difficulties of life. I should answer that he needs to be assured that God is righteous and trustworthy and loyal to men. He needs to feel certain that when he works he shall get results from his work. He must be sure that if he fights a temptation there is a power that will assist him. He needs assurance that it is right and worth while to be true and faithful and pure and honest. If a man is to live a life that is strong and confident he must believe these things. He must trust his own conscience and the conscience of his fellow-men as it is expressed in the customs and ideals of the race. He must be able to subscribe with all his heart to all the fine and moving sentiments that thrill the soul in the great literature of the world. He must feel sure that the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes and the Law of Love are true. Somewhere, somehow, every person must get such faith as this. If he does not, his life will be unstable and disorganized and fruitless. It is the people who do not have this faith who quit easily, or in a moment of temptation let go their hold on goodness and act like savages. It is the people who succeed in gaining this sort of faith who are strong and good and dependable.

But if it is this sort of thing in which we need to have our faith made strong, what sort of events or experiences will bring this about?

If you should find yourself some morning able to speak in half a dozen languages you had never studied, or to speak a tongue that no man understood, would your faith in the Golden Rule or in righteousness and mercy be greatly strengthened? I doubt it. What sort of faith would be awakened by such an event as that? I should think it would be faith that this world in which you are living is a wholly inexplicable, unexpected, topsy-turvy sort of a place, in which any sort of seed is likely to produce any sort of a crop, and any sort of conduct is likely to be as good as any other, and the man who spends laborious days and burns midnight oil to learn a language or to master a science or to acquire a profession is no better nor any more likely to get what he is after than the man who sits in the shade and fans himself.

And furthermore, if hard work is so much at a discount in the matter of learning languages, how are we to be sure that it is worth while anywhere else? Why should a man work hard at all? Why work hard to write well, think clearly and accurately, or do business successfully? Or, more serious still, why work hard to right social wrongs, or to make men better and happier or to be decent and honorable yourself?

It seems to me that if such an event as the

gift of tongues strengthens faith, then all the work of the centuries counts for nothing; all the hard workers were on the wrong track, our schools and libraries and hospitals are absurd, and every man who cares enough to be good to work for it is mad. I for one would not care to live in a world in which the gift of tongues were likely to occur at any moment. I should feel like a man threading a labyrinth about which he knew nothing. It is amusing to read the imaginings of Dean Swift and others of a world in which the unexpected and impossible always happen, but when it comes to actual living the case is different. Give me for daily living a different sort of world. Give me a world of order. Give me a life in which there is law and harmony and beauty. I do not mean a world in which there is no mystery. There is always more than we can understand, and new things are perpetually being discovered. But these things which we bring over from the unknown into the known are never things which make us feel that the man who lies is better than the man who tells the truth. We are continually uncovering such facts as radium, or the germ that causes tuberculosis, or the possibility of wireless telegraphy, or the laws of aviation, but none of these things cause us to question the Golden Rule. In fact, the results of scientific investigation are of an ex-

actly opposite kind. The more deeply we go into the mystery of the world and of life, the more certain are we that we live in a wonderful but yet a wholly trustworthy world. But if sometimes fire did not burn, and if the law of gravitation were intermittent, and if men sometimes in a flash could become possessed of a new language, might we not fear that sometimes loyalty and integrity and gentleness might prove to be of no value?

We may imagine that what we want in order to be strong in our faith in life is some extraordinary, miraculous happening. But let us rather thank God that the world is law-abiding. How strange it seems that this friend with his interest in the gift of tongues should have turned over the pages of the New Testament in his quest for something to strengthen faith, and, passing by the strong and admirable character of Jesus, and all the parables in which he discloses the lessons in faith taught by shepherds and flowers and birds and the kindly sun and rain, the tradition of how Jesus lived and walked and trusted God and men and glorified the daily ordinary happenings of life, should fasten his eye upon this one solitary story of a group of men who once were reported to have suddenly burst out in strange tongues, and felt in this thing the support his faith needed!

The thing that makes our faith strong and confident to-day is our assurance that there is no such thing as the gift of tongues, no substitute for hard work, "neither variation nor shadow of turning" in the laws by which nature and human life are governed. It is this fact which daily reassures us. It is this fact which convinces us that the world is God's; that effort wins results; and that morality is worth all it costs. "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul." It is law that restores the soul, it is law that enables us to sow and reap year after year both in nature and in morals. It is law that strengthens faith.

## VI

### WHY EVERY MAN SHOULD PRAY

“Thought is interlocutory in its very nature. Aspiration takes almost necessarily the form of intercourse with an ideal being.”—*C. H. Cooley.*

“He who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered.”—*Old Proverb.*

One of the parables of Jesus is introduced in these words: “He spake a parable to them to the end that men ought always to pray and not to faint.” I think the proposition can be successfully maintained that there is no condition, moral, social, or intellectual in which it is not wise and right to pray. It is easy to prove that there is no moral condition that rules out prayer. A bad man ought to pray. Surely, he needs it. If there is anything whatsoever to be gained by prayer a bad man ought to pray and not to quit. No one will deny, whatever he may think about prayer, that bad people have been helped to become good by praying. The publican who went up into the temple to pray was accounted by most of his neighbors a bad man and he seems to have been quite free to acknowledge it himself, for he made this confession, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” You may say that when a man prays

the answer comes from within his own soul, yet the fact still stands that having prayed, a man who was weak has been known to become strong. "He who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered." That is a fact under any theory of what prayer is. Theories of prayer may come and go; we may have to-day a far better knowledge of the conditions of prayer than Abraham did, but so long as cowards pray and then find they have courage, and self-willed men pray and then find themselves willing to obey the law, and all sorts and conditions of bad men pray and find in prayer a mighty moral impetus, so long may it be said to be true that all bad people ought to pray and not to quit. No man can be too bad to pray. The worse he is the more appropriate the act.

But all good men ought to pray. They need it fully as much as the bad men. They need it because their goodness is always in danger of becoming a hollow shell, like the righteousness of the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray. He needed to pray even more than the publican did. A good man is apt to realize that he is a good man and then he is in great peril. What will so quickly bring a conceited man to his senses as to pray? For when he prays he measures himself and his little goodness by an absolute standard of good-



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ness. This makes his mountain look like a mole hill. The good man ought, also, to pray because, being good, he may become better, and he may become worse. So long as there is anything above him to which he may climb or anything below him to which he may fall, prayer is in order for him. He needs it for the same reason that the bad man needs it. Prayer stands for moral energy, and he needs moral energy. No matter what the intellectual conditions of prayer may be, there stands the fact. Whereas the good man was about to topple over in his conceit of virtue, now he stands firm; whereas the good man was about to forget his goodness and take a fall out of his enemy, having prayed he resists the temptation. The good man ought always to pray and not to quit.

There is no moral condition whatever in which prayer is absurd or out of place. Even a man who, having committed a dastardly crime, kneels in prayer on the gallows before the drop of the death-trap is not to be sneered at. Who knows what it may mean to him? Who knows that it may not be the God in him conquering at last? It would be a good thing for this man to pray, even if this end should prove to be the absolute end and his soul died with his body, for it is good to fight for betterment up to the last. But it is doubly good to pray if another life

follows this, a life in which, as here, bad people become good and good people become better. So long as experience proves the undeniable fact that prayer creates moral energy and moral sanity, it will always be well to pray. There is no moral state that says rightly to any man, "Quit praying."

But it is equally true that there is nothing in age or outward condition of any kind that may rightly make us stop praying. It is often said that it might be well not to teach children to pray, but that prayer should be reserved for mature years just as we reserve geometry or philosophy. But why should we? A child will build mud cities and play games of imagination and think unreal and grotesque thoughts, but no one would think of postponing his imagination or his thinking until he is grown up. Why should we postpone prayer? Give the child a God he can grasp with his imagination and teach him to pray to this God. As he grows endeavor to purify his ideas, but let him from the first get the notion that in his whole life God is to be a factor. Just what that factor means and how it operates he will think differently about later on, perhaps, but he will start right, living in a world that includes besides himself and his friends, God. A child's prayer will be selfish, somewhat, but is not his whole life selfish?

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As we grow into young manhood and womanhood we ought still to pray and not quit. Our prayer will be different from the prayer of our childhood, less selfish, less material, of wider sweep, perhaps a little less concrete and less clearly defined, but the moral need of prayer still persists. And as we enter the period of life in which we are played upon by influences that tend to destroy our idealism, to endanger our moral and social ardor, and life becomes a grind or a round of functions, then how poignant and how practical is the need of prayer!

But it is true, of course, that the one condition that seems to a great many people a reason for giving up prayer altogether, is not moral nor social nor a matter of age, but rather intellectual. This is a real and serious difficulty. For now comes the question of honesty, and there is no more important question than honesty that any man can consider. For-sake honesty last of all. Yet in the face of this fact I still maintain that there is no one in any state of mind to whom the exhortation does not apply, "Pray and do not quit." I think, first of all, that any one who is ignorant and even superstitious should be encouraged to continue to pray. Such a man may think that God is hidden under a stone or perched in a tree or walking about in a garden in the

cool of the day, ready, like the goblin, to "catch you if you don't watch out." He may never have heard of the reign of law nor of evolution, nor of the fact that the old distinction between the natural and the supernatural is fast fading from the modern consciousness. He may expect God to give him what he asks for, even though it involves the sun standing still or some kindred marvel, yet, I say, let him pray. Teach him better if we can, but never tell him not to pray. For, after all, is it necessary that one's ideas shall be correct in order to enable him to gain something from his prayers? Shall we say, let no man swim who does not swim in the latest and most approved fashion? Jesus criticised very sharply the current modes of prayer of his day. But, he did not say, "Stop praying; your prayers are too external, too long drawn out, and too selfish." He said rather, "Don't pray in this or that way, like the Pharisees who are formal, like the Gentiles who think they shall be heard for their much speaking, like the ascetics who look sad and refuse to wash when they pray, like the man who goes up to the temple to brag; but pray in a genuine way, pray short prayers, pray in your own closet and not on the street corner, pray with your faces clean and full of cheer, pray to the God who seeth in secret." It is true, of course,

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that the more we actually know about what we are doing the greater will be its value, whether we are praying, or reading a book or traveling. Therefore let us know as much as we can. But never-the-less let people with beads in their hands, and people with brass bands shouting their prayers as though God were hard of hearing, and people who only pray when they are afraid, or when things come their way,—let them all continue to pray. Give them light, but meanwhile urge them not to stop praying to the God they can comprehend.

But how about the man who has grown in thought away from his prayers? Shall he continue to pray? Such a man may say, "I cannot think of God now as being anywhere in particular so that I can get at him. I think of all things as governed by law. I do not expect God to do anything different that touches me or mine because I ask him to do so. Why shall I pray? How can I pray?" I say to such a man, continue to pray. If there are some kinds of prayer that you cannot pray any longer, there are other kinds that you can pray. If your notions about things will not let you pray for rain when it is dry, or for the sparing of a life when it is in peril, or for a new suit of clothes, or that God shall be on your side in war or business, or that the sun

shall stand still for your benefit, then do not pray in that way. But why not pray that you may endure and be helpful and not bitter even though the dry weather may continue? Why not pray, as Jesus did, "thy will not mine be done?" Why not pray for character, strength, light, and a new birth of moral energy? Turn from the prayers that are no longer possible for you to these others, that, as a matter of fact, are so much higher and finer. It seems too bad to give up any form of self-expression because it no longer appeals to us on its lower ranges.

But a man may say that his ideas of the world make God so different from the God he used to pray to that he cannot make it seem real at all to pray to him. He does not believe in the personality of God, or certainly not in God as an individual. God is rather the power of the world, the spirit of goodness and the energy of nature, and the molding force of history. How can he pray to an abstraction like that? How can he pray to the spirit of goodness, to the world-energy, to the infinite beauty? But why not? If the old conceptions are not real any longer, while these new conceptions are real, then go ahead and pray to them. I can imagine a man with a richly developed sense of beauty finding comfort and a potent inspiration in such a prayer

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as this:—"Oh Spirit of Beauty that is in the world, seen in flowers and stars and in human faces, help me to worship thee in spirit and in truth, so that I may become beautiful in character and in conduct, having the beauty of holiness and self-restraint and the austere loveliness of righteousness." Why not? Let no unimaginative man with his bread and butter God and his rule of thumb universe refuse to let our lover of the beautiful pray a prayer that will inspire him. So Milton at the beginning of his great poem prayed to the muse of song, "What in me is dark illumine, what is low raise and support." And I can also readily enough think of a man whose soul is filled with the quickening thought of the reign of law praying to the spirit of law and lawfulness and lawabidingness in the world: "Oh Divine Spirit of Law which I see about me and feel within me, I would know more of the wonder of the laws of nature and the laws of social welfare and the laws of the growth of human character, that I may more perfectly conform my life to all laws without and within."

Will not this general proposition apply to any and all mental conditions? There is always something left to pray to. Under what theory of things can a sane man say that he can find nothing, no idea, no force, no reality, no spirit, no ideal, in the world to which he

can pray? Is it not true that always there is for any man something better, holier, wiser, more powerful than himself? Why shall he not reach out his soul to this? Why should he not seek to link himself with this, whatever it may be, and however he may think of it? Whatever seems fraught with hope for the world, whatever seems ideal, the mystery about us and within us, the dreams and longings and aspirations of the race, power, goodness, holiness, eternity, justice, beauty, love, pray to any or all of these, any of them that are real to you. But pray. Let no advocate of long-accepted notions about God or prayer deprive you of your right to pray. But enter into your closet and pray in your closet and pray in your own way. No new view of the world that we may get need dry up the springs of prayer within our souls. If we formerly prayed to a God outside us and now we think he is inside us, then let us pray to him where we believe him to be. If God were formerly a king sitting on a throne, but now he is a spirit of love and power pervading all things as the light suffuses the world, let us pray to him as this spirit. If God used to be to us one who stood ready to work marvels above the law for our benefit, but now he seems to us to be the law itself and to help men only through the law, let us pray to him as we think of him now.



## VII

### RELIGION AND THE PLAIN MAN

"The average man to-day wants science; he wants facts; but he also wants a religion."—*William James.*

The question has often been asked, Why did Jesus select twelve ordinary men to be his disciples? Why did he not select the brilliant men of genius and scholarship about him? Surely there must have been some such men among those who heard him and were touched to better things by his words and spirit. Those men, we should suppose, would have understood Jesus so much better. They would have caught his spirit. They would have enjoyed the beauty and charm and penetrating insight revealed in his parables. They would have appreciated the crisp sentences and clear-cut ideas of the Sermon on the Mount. Yet Jesus called these fishermen, these more or less untrained men, who were not brilliantly endowed, and gathered them about him.

It is not difficult, however, to imagine why he did this. He may have done it, partly, because there were so many ordinary men in the crowd that followed him. He was in a position to feel as Abraham Lincoln felt about the com-

mon people when he said, "God must love the common people because he has made so many of them." He may have chosen them, partly, also, because they were willing to be chosen. The highly trained and richly endowed men who heard him did not show a disposition to be chosen. The ordinary men did. But the real reason why Jesus chose these twelve ordinary men, I have no doubt, was because he knew that extraordinary people are apt to be erratic and unfit for practical concerns. We know the oddities of genius. Common sense and judgment are not common traits among these unusually gifted people. They are apt to be abnormal, uneven, unbalanced. Lombroso, as a result of his study of men of genius, says: "All the geniuses whom I have made the object of my studies despised the average sensational faculties of people. Newton was at one time so excited that he would have taken his niece's finger to stop up his pipe. Flaubert had such a keenly developed sense of hearing that the noise of the streets and the striking of clocks became unbearable. Baudelaire had an over-developed sense of smell. The painter Francis died of happiness on the street because he had seen a picture by Raphael. Many of the poets have died young, among them Keats, Shelley, Byron and Poe. Gautier said that music was the most horrible of all forms of sound."

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Such are some of the common characteristics of genius. Jesus evidently did well not to choose such men for his disciples. If he had selected men to whom music was the most horrible of all forms of sound, or men who could not endure the striking of a clock, or men who would have died if they had seen a picture by some master, we can easily imagine what would have been the result. The impression of Jesus which they would have passed on down the generations and their report of his words would have been interesting and brilliant, but hardly satisfying. If we could have their version of Jesus and his teaching in addition to the version these disciples have given us, we should be glad. But if we must choose, give us the version of these twelve ordinary men.

I wish that Carlyle and Goethe and Shakespeare might have listened to Jesus and talked with him, and then written in poetry or classic prose their impressions. The gospel they would have given us would doubtless have been a wonderful product of genius, but how probable it is that we should have had as much of these men in their account of the master as of Jesus himself. The Gospel according to Emerson or the Gospel according to Browning or the Gospel according to Tolstoi would have been a treasure, but I believe that the Gospel

according to Matthew and Mark and Luke is a truer record of the actual Jesus.

It may be said, indeed, that in the Gospel of John we have a gospel according to a man of genius. Whoever wrote this gospel, it is plainly such a gospel. How different it is from the plain gospels of Matthew and Mark and Luke! What speculation in it! What a different Jesus it presents to us! To many people this is the most valued gospel of all, but I am quite confident that the first three gospels present a far more accurate conception of the Jesus who walked in Galilee. The fourth Gospel is a dreamer's gospel, a philosopher's gospel, a poet's gospel. The first three gospels are for ordinary people living ordinary lives.

This is the service Jesus rendered us by choosing twelve ordinary men to be his disciples. What a service it is! How many thousands of people there are to whom the poet and the philosopher and the man of rare genius can not speak an intelligible word, to whom Browning and Goethe and Plato are a closed book, but to whom the gospels of these twelve ordinary men are as the very bread from heaven.

I imagine, also, that Jesus chose these twelve ordinary men to be his disciples because he did not want specialists. The specialist is a

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man who is highly trained in one particular line. He may know some other things besides his specialty, but his whole mental apparatus has been so organized as to get the largest possible results in one direction. In that direction nothing can escape his eye. If his specialty is plants, as is the case with Mr. Burbank, then he knows all about plants, but he is apt not to know some other things which the ordinary man knows. Moreover, he estimates everything from his particular standpoint. If that is plants, then his philosophy is a plant-philosophy, his religion is a plant-religion, his politics are plant-politics, and his gospel a plant-gospel. All this may be very interesting and suggestive, but the plant gospel of the plant specialist is apt to be a one-sided affair. There may be some things in religion and life that are quite different from anything that happens in a man's garden. We can readily see that if Jesus had chosen as his disciples a group of specialists, plant specialists, brain specialists, insect specialists, law specialists, medical specialists, we should not have had so fair and well-rounded a view of the gospel as we now have. We should have had a great deal of learning crammed into our New Testament. We should have had many wise guesses as to the meaning of things, many more attempts to explain certain say-

ings and deeds and beliefs of Jesus, than we now have. We should have had a medical gospel and a plant gospel, and a psychological gospel and a law gospel and a theological gospel, but the one thing we should not have had would have been a plain man's gospel. You may say that all these gospels would have thrown a flood of light on many things, and I agree with you, but it is far better to have the gospel as it struck the mind and conscience of the plain man, and as he reported it. Then let the specialists read the gospel as we have it and transform it into their own specialty. This is, indeed what has actually occurred. Paul took the plain gospel and made it over into a law gospel or a theological gospel. The author of the Fourth Gospel made it over into a mystic gospel. The Book of Revelation transformed it into a gospel militant, and every man makes it over into his own gospel.

It has often been discussed in Anglo-Saxon countries whether we are more or less apt to get a fair verdict from twelve average men or from a single expert, a judge on the bench alone. Justice is a hard thing to obtain in any case. We certainly do not get it always by either plan. You read a decision handed down by some single judge, very learned, covering many pages with many precedents cited and legal quotations. It sounds

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very learned, and you are apt to think it must be very wise. Yet how often it rests altogether on mere legal quibbles. The judge knows too much law and too little about human nature. He is carried away by his desire to leave no chance to his fellow lawyer to pick flaws in his decision. But the twelve ordinary men, on the other hand, are not by any means infallible. Every man is excused from serving on the jury who gives evidence of having an opinion, and in these days of wide newspaper reading and general culture, what sort of men are you apt to have left when you have sifted out every man who reads and thinks?

Nevertheless, I am inclined to prefer the judgment of the twelve ordinary men, and I want to quote what Mr. G. K. Chesterton has to say about this. He says, "They (the judge and lawyers and policemen, the specialists in crime and in trials) have got used to it all. They do not see the prisoner at the bar. All they see is the usual man in the usual place. They do not see the awful court of judgment; they see only their own workshop. Therefore our Christian civilization has most wisely declared that into their judgment there shall be infused fresh blood and fresh thoughts from the street. Men shall be brought in who can see the court and the crowd, the coarse faces of the policemen and the professional criminals,

the wasted faces of the wastrels, the unreal faces of the gesticulating counsel and see it as one sees a new picture, or a place hitherto unvisited. Our civilization has decided, and very justly decided, that determining the guilt or innocence of men is a thing too important to be trusted to trained men. If it asks for light upon that awful matter, it asks men who know no more law than I know, but who feel the things that I felt in the jury box. When it wants a library catalogued or the solar system discovered, or any trifle of that kind it uses its specialists. But when it wishes anything done that is really serious, it collects twelve of the ordinary men standing round."

This, of course, is put in Mr. Chesterton's characteristically humorous and exaggerated way, yet there is truth in it. And what is true of the problem of obtaining justice is also true of the object Jesus had in mind. He wanted men to drink in and pass on his spirit in a broadly human way. Men who could write encyclopaedias or quote precedents were not the men for this. He wanted not men who could split hairs over some fine point of the gospel, but men who could see the main point and go ahead and tell it in a plain and simple way to other men. It was the human view, not the scholar's view, that he wanted.

Not more than twenty years ago a group of



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gospel specialists kept several young men from going out as missionaries. The young men were sincere, well trained and anxious to make the sacrifice. But they did not feel justified in declaring that a pagan who had not heard the gospel in this life might not have a chance in the next. They did not insist that he did, but they did feel like insisting that he did not. So these experts blocked the way. I can imagine how quickly Jesus would have disposed of the whole matter. Perhaps he would have said, "He that is not against us is for us." It is such a case as this that a plain man of average human experience is liable to take in at a glance. Doubtless Jesus perceived this. There were already enough impediments to make it hard for an ordinary man to live a hopeful and useful and good life. Jesus wanted to clear away impediments. He wanted to help men to live. He wanted a plain and simple and common sense gospel transmitted through the ages. Therefore he did not choose Mr. John Calvin or his like, but plain men, who with all their ignorance and their lack of brilliancy would better serve this end.

To-day we lay so much stress on the intellectual conditions of personal religion, since these conditions have so radically altered, that we need to remind ourselves that after all this is not the whole story. Common sense and typi-

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cal human experience are always big factors in religion. The man of to-day who goes out in search of a personal religion will do well to hear and heed the words of the scholars. He will be wise to make himself familiar with all that the specialists have to say. For they have indeed thrown a flood of light upon the whole problem of religion. But after he has listened and learned and pondered, then let him return to the reassuring truth that people who look at life in the average way and who have a general poise and sanity of soul will always have the kind of personal religion that is of the greatest worth.

## VIII

### THE INFLUENCE OF JESUS UPON RELIGIOUS FAITH

"The first revival that followed the presence of Jesus in Galilee was a revival of the desire to live."—*G. A. Gordon.*

"The most ingenuous hope is nearer the truth than the most rational despair."—*Charles Wagner.*

"The bequest of Jesus to the world was the expression of his own religious experience."—*G. H. Gilbert.*

It would be easy to run over the whole list of definite religious convictions that most people hold to-day and show how profoundly all of these have been affected by the Master. He has put his hand upon all these matters of faith and none is the same as before his magic touch. Others, of course, have labored upon our common faith; Paul added the weight of his own ideas, and the Greek and Latin fathers helped to shape the faith; all the forces of subsequent history, indeed, have been at work upon it, so that it is a hard thing to know exactly what Jesus' own faith was. But in spite of these facts, we know that the things we believe are not what they would have been if Jesus had not lived.

But after all, the most important thing is

not said about Jesus' influence upon our faith, when you have made a catalogue of the definite things He believed and which He has induced men to believe. The most striking thing about his influence is, rather, this:—that Jesus gave a certain tone to faith. He imparted an exultant and confident ring to faith. He inspired faith with a hopefulness and a fullness of joy which it had not had before. That is his achievement *par excellence*, and that is the supreme achievement for faith. For the greatest thing about any man's faith is not the particular things he believes, but the way in which he believes them and the effect his believing them has upon his mind and his outward life. A man may believe a long list of things and yet have no joy in his belief or in his life. He may skulk like a coward in the presence of the real facts of life in spite of his fine faith. Another man may find it hard to make his faith concrete at all, or to mention many particulars, yet this faith may yield him peace and joy. Dr. Grenfel has lately told his own story of religion in "A Man's Faith." You will read this account in vain for anything fresh or noteworthy about the particulars of his faith, but the tone of it, the ring of it, the irrepressible buoyancy of it, the fact that it pervades his life and his world so completely and so happily, this is the quality of his faith that lends significance

and gives interest to his story. It was just this peculiar quality that Jesus gave to faith.

Can you find any better word to designate this quality than the word confidence? There is a confidence about religious faith and about one's attitude to life in general as Jesus exhibited it that has always been irresistibly attractive to men. The religious faith of the Pharisee was ugly and hard and yielded no joyous trust. The religious faith of the Stoic was admirable in many ways and genuinely heroic, but there is no charm of confidence about it. The faith of the Epicurean was gay and full of apparent cheer but it was superficial and utterly devoid of permanent hopefulness or confidence. A fatalist has a certain faith, but from that kind of faith "may the good Lord deliver us." A materialist also has a certain faith about things, and he is often resigned and calm and strong, but his faith lacks the ringing note of joyous confidence. There is, in fact, no faith, in the sheer quality of it, aside from the definite items of its creed, that can for a moment be compared with the faith Jesus had and which he inspires in others. This tone of faith is what he accomplished for religion and life.

You may apply this interpretation of Jesus' influence upon faith to any of the different items of faith. There is our faith in God, for

example. I do not think there is anything original in what Jesus said about God. He said he was our Father. But the Jew had said that for many years, at least some Jews had, and all might have done so if they had read their own literature with a discerning heart. But most Jews continued to call God Jehovah. It was Jesus who succeeded in making Father the inevitable and universally accepted name of God, and he was able to inoculate men's relations with God with a filial, friendly comradeship of confidence which completely alters the whole aspect of religion. "As often as ye pray, say Our Father," said Jesus. So we do, all Christian people everywhere, and as often as we think and as often as we suffer and as often as we are wondering whether a man with a dark hued skin should be treated in a brotherly way, we say "Our Father" and then we know what to do and how to bear all things, and we are confident of ourselves and of our duty and our privilege. Originality? It was not necessary that Jesus should be original in his faith. The needed ideas were already in the world, but men were making no practical use of them. There was no confidence about faith. After Jesus had talked about "Our Father" and had been so confident himself, a new note, a new reality, a new tone of confidence crept into the relation a man sustains with God which is distinctly

Christian, and which is the root of all religious faith, and the greatest thing in life.

This note of confidence in the faith which Jesus himself had and which he inspires in others may be described, first of all, as a moral confidence. It is a confidence which inspires a man in his moral struggle. "I am confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ." In these words Paul reveals the fact that he has caught this vision of moral confidence. God is in this moral struggle but nevertheless man is enjoined to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling." There is also a new confidence in the character a man is trying to win, and in the general issues at stake. Jesus made it seem richly worth while to practice self-denial, to throttle the brute within, and to aim at the most exalted type of character. There is no moral indifferentism in Christianity. We do not find Jesus discussing the question whether it is better to do right or not to do right, but he and all who follow his spirit are engaged in one moral enterprise, the achievement of character, through self-denial and self-forgetting service. Surely this is a noteworthy contribution to the moral struggle of humanity. It is a great thing to be able to put into it this ring of confidence. The goal is worth while and a man is equal to the

race, if he puts all his strength into it and trusts in God. The ethics of Jesus as a whole are shot through with confidence. And this is a far more important gift to men than to determine whether human nature as we have it is a product of a long and slow evolution or a direct creation by the hand of God. What men need in their moral struggle is not so much a clear-cut theory of moral origins and moral processes as a feeling that the game is worth while and that they can play it successfully.

But this tone of confidence which Jesus injected into our faith is also a social confidence. I mean by this that Jesus inspires men to believe that all men are capable of being touched to nobler issues and of being made into worthy citizens of the new social order. I do not know of anything more amazing, though it may seem quixotic to the hard headed man who has had some actual experience with men, than the way in which Jesus trusted people. He was sure they had something good in them and that they could be trusted to do their part. It seems almost ludicrous to think of Jesus going about choosing publicans, tax-gatherers, women of the street, lepers and beggars to become members of an ideal social order. But it is not really ludicrous after all, but altogether sublime. And if he had meditated long to find the most striking expedient to arouse a universal



social confidence, could he have found a better way than this? We expect respectable people to live in a respectable way, and we expect a few choice spirits here and there to be able to live in a Brook Farm or a Utopia or in any ideal place where the only law is to love the Lord with all one's heart and his neighbor as himself. But when a man goes about and picks out saloon-keepers and women of the street and all sorts of rude, undisciplined men and women and proceeds to build his ideal society out of such material, everybody sits up and takes notice. It is a striking object-lesson. But more, when a man actually attains a large measure of success with such material and these people actually come nearer living in an ideal way than their respectable and disciplined neighbors do, the lesson is still more impressive. "Not many noble, not many wise," not many respectable, but the poor, the ignorant, the mere flotsam and jetsam of society, not usually included in social programs of an ideal character, these are the ones called. We must, in all honesty, add that Paul has to tell some pretty hard stories later on about some of these people. The Corinthian letters are sad reading. But we remember that "Ben Hur" and "Quo Vadis" and "Hypatia" reveal the way in which respectable classes were living at this same time, and on the other hand we can think with joy of

Timothy and his mother Lois and his grandmother Eunice and the slave Onesimus and many more. These men and women surely justify the social confidence which was at the very core of Jesus' faith and which has made Christianity inevitably a social religion.

But still farther, Jesus has quickened in men a fine confidence in what we call the world-order, that is, in events, in facts, in nature, in the universe at large. "Be not over anxious about your life," said Jesus. He had a beautiful and unbroken confidence in seeds and soil and seasons and the uniformity and trustworthiness of nature in general. He was not afraid of ghosts or devils or the whole power of the unseen world. He looked with hope and trust into the face of death and waited with confidence for the next hour to be born, whether it should be in Galilee or in Heaven. "Let not your heart be troubled, believe in God." He did not tell very definitely what he believed. He did not announce a finished philosophy nor a scientific system. He did not teach a definite doctrine about the nature of immortality, nor build a logical argument about it. But he succeeded in making men feel sure of his own faith as to this world and the next.

This is Jesus' confidence in the world-order. It is not a scientific explanation that he gave, but a feeling of world-trust that he himself

had and which in a wholly marvelous way he has been able to impart to men. This confidence bids the scholar and investigator go ahead with his work. For the world is good at heart. It can be trusted. It will bear the search light. We cannot know too much about it. This same confidence inspires the farmer and the builder and all parents and workers for others and all who are engaged in any way in the business of living. The farmer may sow his seed and lie down in peace and hope at night. The builder may build for the generations before him. People may trust their good instincts and go on being honest and faithful and devoted. They may face death without fear.

How wonderfully this confidence has inspired the poets. All Christian poetry is permeated with this quality. There is Browning with his matchless spirit of confidence,

"God's in His heaven  
All's right with the world."

And there is Tennyson, often uncertain of his faith, and his verses sometimes heavy with crepe, but, at his best, singing the song of confidence, too,

"I held it truth with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things."

And again,

“Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Shall be the final goal of ill.”

And the last glimpse of the aged poet,

“I hope to see my pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.”

It is this confidence of faith, moral, social, and as touching the world-order, which is distinctly Christian, which Christianity always has when at its best and which flows directly from the buoyant faith of Jesus himself. We may not always know what came from him, so complex has Christianity become through the centuries. But this is unmistakably his. This is the ineffaceable stamp which he put upon it. And moreover, this is of far greater worth than any more definite thing he might be conceived to have done. This makes for progress while any definite articles of faith might have meant stagnation. But the general conception of a divine universe, in which “whatever is best shall be,” in which a man lives in trust and dies saying, “Father into thy hands I commend my spirit,” in which a man can put his best efforts into his work and yet feel that he is aided by “a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness,” this conception as a broad working life-theory quickens and steadies and touches

with patience and inspires with energy. "In my Father's house are many mansions." That is the keynote. Plenty of room, plenty of power, plenty of love. This is the atmosphere in which we work and live and die.

Surely confidence of this sort is what the world needs now and always. All workers, all sufferers, all disappointed people, all the disillusioned, all the worn out and weary, all the troubled and all the ill-treated, all these may well remember that up to the last bitter hour the confidence of Jesus never wavered. This is the Christian mood. This is the genuine Christian tone of faith.

## IX

### OTHER RELIGIONS THAN OURS

“The whole religious life of man and his history spring from the work and action of God, by means of which he draws men individually from error to truth, from imperfection to perfection, from egoism to fraternity, from the sensual to the moral, from the natural to the spiritual, and attracts them to Himself.”—*Wilhelm Bousset*.

“I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him.”—*The Book of Acts*.

There has been a marked interest of late years in the study of the religions of the world. China, India, Persia, and Greece all had great religions, and some of these countries still have them. Their sacred books have played a notable part in the lives and thinking of their people. These sacred books, now that they have been studied and become known, are found to be in themselves literature of a high order, and to contain conceptions of great value and interest. Splendid prophets, too, have arisen and lived and taught among these nations, such as Socrates, Plato, Buddha, Zoroaster and Confucius. These men and their careers and their teaching now stand out in our minds with other great and more familiar leaders of hu-

manity along the upward pathway of the Spirit.

This new interest in world-religions in general has naturally had its influence upon Christian people. It furnishes one of the conditions for modern personal religion. Several facts about religion are emphasized by it in a rather startling way.

We must think of religion in general, for example, after a somewhat different fashion. Finding religion everywhere and finding, moreover, so much that is good in other religions than our own, such a noble religious literature, such really fine religious poetry, so eager a striving after righteousness, such conceptions here and there of God, and such sincere and high minded religious leaders, we are forced to believe that genuine religion is a universal kind of thing. We cannot assume in an easy and superior way that the majority of the races of the world had no religion at all worthy of the name, whole tracts of the world being left to blind gropings, totally unassisted by God. The results everywhere are of too high a character for any such assumption. It is evident that religious inspiration is everywhere and always has been. God has labored unremittingly to make every nation fear him and work righteousness.

Again, in the light of this new vision of

world-religions we observe very clearly that religion, each religion, and religion as a whole, is an evolution. We may note this fact from the Old Testament and the New Testament and from Christian history, but it is emphasized still more forcefully by our acquaintance with these other religions. It is plain that we cannot think that there was a time when there was no religion to be found anywhere in the world, people never having conceived the idea of it at all, nor having had its rudiments, and then all at once religion was given to the world, as Prometheus in the classic legend captured fire. But religion in some form is co-eval with humanity, just as art is and commerce and social relations, and has grown with the growth of men.

We see very plainly, too, that religions are all more or less alike. Our own religion is not so totally unlike all other religions as we may have supposed. We have assumed, perhaps, that there was so little in common between the religion of the Bible and the religion of India or Persia that we could almost use the comparison which the Psalmist uses in contrasting God and men, "As the heavens are high above the earth so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts and my ways than your ways." But not so. There are a great many things that are much alike in all these religions. As ex-



amples of these similarities, we may mention not merely such well known universal ideas as God, sacrifice and worship, but also such Christian ideas, exclusively Christian, as we may have supposed, as atonement for sin, divine incarnation, and a prophet believed to be of superhuman birth. Religions are astonishingly alike in many of these things. These elements of religion appear here and there in the religious literature of Greece and Rome and India and Persia.

But we see, too, with great clearness that religions are also very much unlike. They are intensely individual. Though they have many things in common, and move along in their history with amazing similarity, yet a closer acquaintance with any one of these great religions reveals the fact that it is itself and not a mere copy of some other or of all other religions. They are not any more alike than all literatures are alike or the art of all nations or their music or politics. Japanese art is quite different from European art. Russian literature and French literature are quite different from English or American literature. The social ideals and customs of India are in striking contrast with ours. And it is so in religion. It is easy to see that each of these religions has its own special quality. It is like the people who have it. It partakes of

their national or racial genius. You become acquainted with the people and you understand why they have such and such religious ideas and customs. And again you become acquainted with their religion and you discover the peculiar influence which it has upon them.

The influence of Mohammedanism on those who adhere to it is of a very definite sort and differs in a quite marked way from the influence of Buddhism or Confucianism on their adherents. The Mohammedan religion is a religion of definite rules enforced by definite penalties and concrete rewards. It does not stimulate people to think for themselves. It leaves no open questions of conduct to be debated. A very clear-cut and narrowly conceived relation between the Mohammedan and all other peoples and religions is taught. The tendency of the religion is, therefore, to produce narrow religionists, zealots, men of legal obedience, careful in all externals and intensely loyal, but not men who dream and wonder and consider and grow intellectually and spiritually.

The religions of India, in general, and the religion of Buddhism in particular, on the other hand, are vague, dreamy, indefinite. They deal in large conceptions but the edges are never clear-cut. The aim is not practical. The spirit is tolerant, even indifferent, to what other people believe or do. All that the Buddhist asks

is to be let alone. He wishes to get away from the concretely real so that in an atmosphere of vague contemplation he may become indifferent to heat and cold and wealth and poverty and all earthly conditions. How striking the difference between this attitude and that of Mohammedanism! So utterly different, and yet both are religions and great religions, too.

Similarly Confucianism and Judaism and Zoroastrianism each has its own particular point of view; each has its own quality and its own value. Confucianism places strong emphasis on reciprocity as the foundation of all human intercourse, but makes little or nothing of prayer or the future life. Zoroastrianism is rich in speculations about the unseen world and its conflict going on about us and greatly influencing us and even determining our destiny. Judaism proclaims a law of righteousness and a God of righteousness. And each religion, moreover, makes its own kind of people.

Now it is plain that a wide-awake man who is building his personal religion in these days will have to take note of these new religious findings. He will see, for example, that he must throw his own religion into the general mass of religions and let it "sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish," as it can. In other words it must stand on its own merits. He

cannot say that his religion is of God and these others are of the devil, and let it go at that. He cannot be true to what he knows and follow that course. He cannot beg the question in that way. But if his religion is superior he must show its superiority, in the same way that one shows the superiority of French prose over other prose, or of one brand of political institution over another. If Christianity is better than these other religions, why is it better? The origin of all religions being the same, why shall a man be a Christian instead of a Buddhist? Or if all religions spring from the same source, why shall a man have any religion at all?

In most cases, doubtless, this new view-point will give one at first a distinct jolt, but there have been many jolts in the history of religion and most of them have proved wholesome in the long run. Jesus jolted his contemporaries very uncomfortably when he insisted that God was no more truly in Jerusalem or "in this mountain" than anywhere else. After a man has been duly jolted by this new notion of the universality of religion, he will find that he sees farther than he did before. He lives in a bigger world. He has more brothers than he supposed he had. God is a bigger conception to him. Religion, instead of being a scanty article, of which there is not enough to go

round, or a sort of experiment in one spot of the universe alone, is abundant, plenty of it, enough for every people in every age to have all they want of it. It is as abundant as sunshine and air and as universal.

Will a man not, also, have a new and stronger faith in religion? If religion has been entrusted to everybody, and if it has been battered about everywhere through the long centuries, and has had to take its chances like any other human treasure, and yet has lived and survived not merely in one place but the world over, at least among cultured peoples, we need not be so fearful about its future. We may compare religion in this respect to fire. If there were only a little fire, just a spark, and only a few matches, and we knew no other way to enkindle it, then we might be fearful about that little fire. But if we know that fire is universal and abundant and that we can produce it without matches, then we have a sure and easy confidence about the future of fire in the world. We have no fear of a fireless world. It is so with religion. The reason we have religion to-day is not because it has been so carefully tended and guarded by priests and theologians, though they deserve some credit. But we have religion because it springs up spontaneously in all normal human souls. It is shaped by circumstances and conditions, but

yet in all cases the vital spark of religion is there. This is the view of its abundance and its indestructible character which is thrust upon us by the study of the world-religions. Just as you cannot destroy ethics or lose art from the world by the loss or overthrow of some particular theory of art or ethics, or of some particular institution, so you cannot blot out religion from the world by changing your theory of prayer or your notion of the future life. Religion is tough and enduring. Even if we should destroy it in one quarter of the world we might confidently look for its appearance elsewhere. Even if one generation becomes lukewarm and contemptuous about religion, in the next generation or the next after that it will come up again, as surely as the sun will rise each morning and "every winter change to spring."

There will be, I have no doubt, here and there a person who will learn for the first time some such fact as that Confucius uttered the Golden Rule before Jesus did, and that Buddha said noble things and that Zoroaster was a man of religious genius akin to the Hebrew prophets, and that Plato gave expression in his immortal Dialogues to some sentiments that are finer than certain portions of the Old Testament, and he will, forsooth, lose his head over it all, and even forsake his own religion

and try to introduce strange Gods and new cults, into this land of the Puritans. But if this man and the few others like him, would be a little more patient and go a little farther in their study, they would accomplish two things. First, they would be able to add many fine poems and noble sayings and thrilling visions of hope to their library of religious classics, for there are many things that a man may learn to love and admire and feed on in the sacred books of the world. And secondly, they would come to feel a deeper content than ever before in being Christians and not Mohammedans or Buddhists or Confucians or any other type of religionist. A simple act of fair comparison between Christianity, its moral quality, its spiritual tone, its appeal to the heart and the intellect, its effect upon individuals and nations, is sufficient to put Christianity far and away in the lead. We need no special theory of inspiration to bolster up our religion. Let it stand with the rest and it is easily head and shoulders above them all. Jesus is a far better teacher than Buddha. There is a moral health about Jesus that is conspicuously lacking in Buddha. The Confucian rules of practice we may well add to our stock of moral precepts but they will not take the place of the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. We come back from

the reading of every other sacred literature with deep appreciation of its worth, but with a new realization of the incomparable beauty and power of the Beatitudes and the Parables, as well as of the moral and spiritual leadership of Jesus.

A man who has made a study of the world-religions has by that means burst into a bigger world and at the same time planted his feet more solidly upon the rock. He is moved to exclaim with a new understanding, "What hath God wrought!" He will have a new joy in his religion and a new tolerance. He will be prepared to say, "As many as are led by the spirit of God these are the sons of God." It will be only a very small soul, surely, that will shrivel or grow cold if the discovery is made that God has not been neglecting the rest of the world. If our religion depends for its certainty and for its joy-giving power on our notion that nobody else or at least few others have it besides ourselves, then a "little journey in the world" will make us unhappy. But if our religion seems to us the more valuable the more universal and ageless and widely useful it is, then the revelations of the world's sacred books will add immensely to our sense of joy in having a religion.



## X

### TAPPING THE UNSEEN WORLD

"Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, remains one absolute certainty that one is ever in the presence of an Infinite, Eternal Energy from which all things proceed."—*Herbert Spencer*.

"Its (science's) passion is for truth, and truth is a temple of which the senses are only the vestibule."—*G. A. Coe*.

"The things that are seen are temporal; the things that are unseen are eternal."—*St. Paul*.

People have always believed that there is more in the world than the senses give us, or than the human brain can catch and hold by its processes. When we have added together all that we can get by the senses and by thought still the sum is not complete. Somehow, somewhere, everywhere in fact, there is something more. When we have gone as far as we can there is still a beyond. When we have used our utmost strength of arm or brain or heart in the problems and troubles of the world and of life, there is still more strength somewhere in the universe. There is a "power not ourselves," and there is a light and a justice and a law and a reality in the world that is also "not ourselves." Who does not have this feel-

ing? How poor a thing life would be without it? This is the real background of the world and of life.

People have always tried in one way or another to tap this unseen world. The history of the progress of the world and of the race is not merely the story of the progressive tapping of the sense-world. It is equally the story of the tapping of the unseen world.

It is a very fascinating and rewarding study to trace some of the different ways in which the men and women who appear in the pages of the Bible tried to tap this world, for while every people has endeavored to tap this world, it is the Bible people who by common consent attained supreme success in this venture. They did not tap the world with which science deals with any great success, nor the possibilities of culture and art, nor the resources of politics and commerce. But they did tap the unseen with astonishing success.

Sometimes their tapping meant simply to sit down before the mystery of things and wonder and fear and adore. They were sure there was something "over there," beyond the sunset or the sunrise, up on the top of Mt. Sinai, or back within those impenetrable forests of Lebanon or among the rocks and loneliness of the wilderness beyond the Jordan, or close round about them, just beyond the senses. They watched

for it to "break out" in a Burning Bush or a Pillar of Fire, or a heavenly voice or a ghostly touch or an angel visitant. Wherever they believed this unseen had "broken out" into the seen they erected altars and took off their shoes and called the place "Holy Ground." "I heard thy voice in the garden," runs the Garden of Eden story, "and I was afraid."

But the tapping of these Bible folk went farther than this. They tried to get hold of this power that dwelt beyond the senses and to utilize it for their personal advantage. In the hard struggle for existence they felt the need of help. Here was a possible ally. Why rely on the visible world and stop there? Why not enter into an alliance offensive and defensive with the unseen world? So they endeavored to gain this end. Jacob at Bethel, after the unseen has broken into the seen in his dream, with the keen business sense of the Jew at once makes his bargain: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God."

They were not always, however, so purely selfish in their tapping. Out of this effort to get this other world as an ally there grew the effort to co-operate with that world. They found, as they believed, that "over there" is

a will and a way, and a man's part is to discover this and to work with it. Out of this conception arose some of the finest elements in the life of this remarkable people. The prophet cries out, "What doth the Lord require of thee?" and the Psalmist exclaims, "Oh how I love thy law," and Paul defines the work and privilege of a man after this fashion, "We are fellow workers with God," and Jesus prays, "Thy will not mine be done."

Thus they came to feel that by tapping the unseen world they could discover law, the law by which men ought to live, the law of righteousness and social health. All men needed to do was to tap the unseen, or to wait until the unseen should break over into the seen, on Mt. Sinai or somewhere else, till the finger of God should write the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone amid fire and smoke and mystery, and the moral law and the social law would be revealed. This explains why they felt so sure the law was right. They believed it had not grown up by gradual accretion, the slow deposit of human experience, but that it came directly from that world where truth and right dwell in eternal perfection into this world where men live and struggle and aspire. This faith gave them a tremendous moral earnestness.

Still farther, they tapped the unseen world to get a solution of the riddle of existence and

of all the puzzles and mysteries of life. Where do we come from and whither do we go? How was the world made? Why do bad people often seem to have an easy time and good people suffer? These and kindred puzzles they tried to solve, not by test tube and hammer and research and hard thinking, after the modern way, but by tapping the unseen. They simply said, "The explanation lies over there. There is some purpose hidden there. The unseen power is ceaselessly at work. 'Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for him.' Over the margin, beyond the sunset, all questions will be answered."

Another treasure these Bible folk gained by their tapping the unseen was a sense of companionship. There are plenty of people in the world to-day and there were then. Yet men and women are often lonely. Often the more people there are the lonelier is a man's life. It was when oppressed with this feeling of loneliness that these men and women in earlier days tapped the unseen for companionship. And they found what they were after. One of the most recurrent and exultant themes of the Bible is this search for a friend and its successful issue. Dip into the Bible anywhere and you will find men and women tapping the unseen world for friendship and finding it. "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms," is one expression of joy.

“He is not far from any one of us,” cries out Paul, and Jesus uttered his personal experience in the words, “I am not alone for the father is with me.” One and all they might have said with Gray in his Elegy:

“He gained from heaven, ’twas all he wished, a friend.”

Finally, these men and women of the Bible tapped the unseen world to get back the friends they had lost. This was their most daring venture. Their friends died, disappeared, never came back, but these tappers of the unseen merely said, “They are over there. If we could get over there we should find them. Some day we shall go there and see them again. The visible world has lost them. But the invisible world holds them for us forever.” David comforts himself over the death of his child by this reassurance, “I shall go to him but he shall not come back to me.” “To die is to depart and be with Jesus,” said Paul. And Jesus put this confidence in these memorable words, “In my father’s house are many mansions.” He even flatly insisted, “The dead are the living.”

Such are some of the results of this wonderful tapping of the unseen world by this people of spiritual genius. Can we be thankful enough that this one nation devoted itself to this sole

occupation? While other nations were tapping the rocks and the air and the sea and the caves or the relations of man to man, and only now and then tapping the unseen world, these Bible folk were forever at this one thing, all their best minds, their choicest spirits, their poets, their dreamers, their saints and their men of action alike, tapping ceaselessly with brain and heart and conscience and imagination, forever tapping the unseen world, until at last Jesus appeared, the fruit, we might say, of this immemorial quest of his people, like the descendant of a nation of scientists or musicians or artists. And to Jesus the unseen world was so real that there seemed to be no walls to tap, but he appeared always to see and hear and comprehend what was going on "over there." The seen and the unseen were equally his world of experience.

Now the man of to-day does not find it easy to take this tapping of the unseen very seriously. For this reason he finds it hard to get hold of religion. He is apt to class all tapping of the unseen with the calling up of departed souls at spiritualistic seances. Even when scientists such as the students of Psychological Research turn to this tapping on the walls of the unseen and listening for a response from the other side, he smiles incredulously. And well he may, for no tangible or valuable or even

respectable results have been thus far gained by these methods. He is wise, too, and honest in turning the light of criticism on these Bible tappings. Surely there are many crudities there. The moral law certainly never emanated from Mt. Sinai, and was not written by the finger of God on tablets of stone. It never came ready-made out of the unseen into the seen. Law and custom and the modern conscience are, like all else that we have, the product of age-long conflict and hard work and much thinking and many tears. But yet the faith which lay within this crude form is a faith that is of the utmost worth. For this faith means that law and right are things of august, eternal character and that whatsoever is right here must be forever right, and that the moral law operates everywhere and always in all worlds. We may say the same thing of the other treasures that were gained by tapping the unseen. The best hopes of humanity, the noblest conceptions of social relationship, the basis of moral earnestness and of social passion, those faiths that keep men and women at work and full of hope, all these have been greatly influenced by these men who spent their lives tapping the unseen. The Burning Bush and the Pillar of Fire and the Ten Tablets and all these other actual and literal accounts of the bursting of the unseen into the seen are doubt-



less stories of the childhood of the race. And the positive assertions of these men as to heaven and immortality and the definite will of God, go beyond what anyone can actually know in the modern sense of "knowing." But that conception which is the kernel of these reports from the unseen that the full explanation of what goes on within the sense-world is explained by reference to a far larger world, and that power and light and inspiration and reality are in that world as well as here and perpetually issue from that world to this, who can or who would deny this?

It is this general conception and faith that is the very heart of religion. When we ask what is right and try to do it, that is morality. When we ask what can we do that is beautiful or useful, that is work or craft or art. When we ask what is the nature of the visible world and try to discover facts and laws, that is science. When we ask what is the wisest way to live together, and attempt to live in this way, that is society or the science of sociology. But none of these is religion. It is when we tap the unseen world, the beyond, the more than ourselves, to get from it what the Bible men and women tried to get, that we can talk about religion. And furthermore, it is when we try as best we may, by faith, and ritual, by mystic communion, according to our tempera-

ment, to bring the light and power and reality that we gain by our tapping over into our craft and our art and our politics and our social commerce and our questions of conscience and the total play of human life, that we are genuinely religious. When a man says, "My religion is to pay my debts" or "My religion is to be a good neighbor," he is missing the very point of religion. He might as well say to a friend who asks him if he has any flowers in his garden, "Yes my children are my flowers," as that Roman matron insisted that her children were her jewels. It is a pleasant fancy to call children flowers or jewels. It shows that we regard them as beautiful and of value. But flowers and jewels and children can never be the same. Nor can debt paying and neighborliness and fidelity in work ever be the same as religion. But on the other hand, woe to that man who does not put his religion into all these things!

By their tapping of the unseen these Bible men and women have taught us to make use in this world of that bigger world; to surround this life with a larger life; to supplement our energy of mind and heart and body by an inexhaustible energy; to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible"; and that "in Him we live and move and have our being." Let us subject to the keenest criticism every man who declares

that he has tapped the unseen and discovered this or that; let us call legends, legends, and absurdities, absurdities; let us discount as many Burning Bushes and Fiery Pillars and interruptions of the natural order as we will. But let us admit, as we reasonably may, that the general result of this venture of tapping the unseen, which is faith in God and a spiritual universe and the hope of immortality, is worth cherishing. We may one and all echo the faith of the poet, which is at the same time a wonderful expression of the spirit of the Bible and the spirit of religion.

“And I smiled to think God’s greatness flows  
around our incompleteness,  
'Round our restlessness his rest.”

## XI

### THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

“Religion is not the truth of any stereotyped propositions, but the highest life of the moving spirit, nor can it be conveyed from mind to mind except by the vibration of harmonic chords.”—*James Martineau*.

“Religion is the sum of all the higher feelings, and like holy music, it should uninterruptedly accompany the whole of man’s active life.”—*Schleiermacher*.

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.”—*St. Paul*.

We are apt to think of ourselves as living a number of different lives. We are not merely like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, living two distinct lives, but we are living many different and distinct lives. We live the life of the flesh. We eat and sleep and run and rest. We live a work life. We try to earn an honest living. We are parts of the work and wages world. We live a life of social relationships. We love and hate. We discuss politics at the barber shop or exchange gossip at afternoon teas. We live an intellectual life. We all think, or at least try to think. We may think foolishly or illogically or only once in a while. We may think only, as a rule, of bread and clothes and “the main chance.” But still we think, and most of us think at some time or other of the

eternal puzzle of human life, of the whence and whither that forever baffle humanity. We have our moral life. We are doing right or wrong and we know it and we are worrying more or less about it. We are puzzling over questions of duty and equity and honor. But apart from all these lives we are living, we quite commonly regard ourselves as living another life which we call the life of the spirit. When we say this we probably think of God. We look up. We think of altars and "quiet haunts of prayer," and the "dim religious light." We think of Jacob at Bethel or of Moses and the Burning Bush, or of saints wrestling in prayer. In other words, we think of the life of the spirit as totally different from all these other lives. Why? Because we say or think in connection with it the word God. After a day filled with work and social commerce and reading and thinking and decisions affecting business or society, and all the other things people ordinarily do, then at last after the custom of his boyhood, before he closes his eyes at night, a man lifts his heart to God and repeats a few words of prayer, and we call this last act in distinction from all else that he does his spiritual life. In relation to his stomach he is a creature of the flesh; in relation to his bench or his desk he is a man of work or of business; in relation to his conscience he is a man of morals;

in relation to his brain he is a man of intellectual life; in relation to other people his is a social being; but when he prays he is a spiritual being. He lives the spiritual life only when he prays or is directly engaged in one way or another in dealing with God. It is as if all his different natures and phases of life were shut up in the different drawers of a desk. Now he unlocks one and now another. In one of these compartments, and only one is God. A few moments here and there in the course of his day or his life, he takes the key that unlocks that drawer and opens it and communes with God, and that is the sum of his spiritual life.

Expressed in this way it seems absurd, and yet that is a quite common way of regarding the life of the spirit and also of trying to live the life of the spirit. It is a convenient way, too, for a God locked up in a drawer and you holding the key cannot be a very active God nor able to interfere too much in your life. But it is just this type of religion which to-day is losing its power over the minds of men. If men think of religion in this way, they are quite apt to feel that it is a negligible quantity. A religion that can be bottled up in this way is not liable to have a very firm grip on the mind of a wideawake man. It seems unreal and remote from the concerns that engross our attention. It is as if the real man were his mus-

cles and blood, his desire for home and friends, his working energy and his working capacity and his thirst to know and his desire to grow and possess and attain, while somewhere about his person he carries a very small creature of a totally different kind, a Lilliputian, a fairy, called the spiritual man. Religion has to do with this little dwarf, this curiosity that we carry about in our pocket.

Is there not a better notion of the life of the spirit than this? Surely there is. What is a piano? Would you say that it is a case, plus some hammers and keys and other mechanism, with a pretty covering thrown across it and a vase or two and other ornaments resting upon it, and then super-added to these things something called melody or tune; something which, like a coat or a hat, can be put on or off at will? When the piano is declared to be in tune we do not mean that we have added some separable thing to it, but that the whole mechanism is in proper condition to give out music when the keys are struck by a practiced hand. Its musical-life is not something distinct from its wood-life or its metal-life or its ivory-life or the life of the ornaments upon it. Its musical-life is its very life, the evidence of its being a piano at all and not merely a box with keys and hammers.

I wonder if that is not the way to think of

a man and his spiritual life? He cannot be cut up into these different men, the business man, the appetite man, the social hunger man, the conscience man and the thinking man, and last of all the spiritual man. When a man acts, all of him acts. And the tone of him, the tune of him, his temper, the way he feels and thinks and the impression he makes, that is really the life of the spirit. He is living the spiritual life when he is in tune, that is, when he is glad to live, self controlled, open minded, at peace, hopeful and confident and good.

With this idea of the spiritual life, follow such a man through his day's life. He begins the day at home with his family, and again after his day's work he goes with them to the public park or spends the evening at home. But all this social commerce is illuminated by kindness and restraint and affection. He takes his place for his ten hours in the work of the world. But he works hard and puts conscience and good will into all he does. He may see a funeral train pass and a fleeting thought of the mystery of things may cross his mind, but he is not afraid. He may read of new discoveries and new views of truth, but he is not angry or fearful lest his world of thought and faith may be upset. All through his day he tries to know his duty and to do it. There is no phase of life in which he is not interested.



He can sympathize with the exclamation of Oliver Wendell Holmes, "I am alive, I am alive from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head."

In all this he is living the life of the spirit. But where, it may be asked, does God come in? Why do you call this the spiritual life? Can there be a life of the spirit without God? Ah, that is just the point. That is the best part of it. Where does God come in? Everywhere. Not in a niggardly corner of a man's day, not just as he closes his eyes at night, but in the whole day from start to finish. Where does the sunlight come in, where does the rain come in, where does the earth come in, where does life itself come in? Everywhere, all the time, when we do all that we do as children of God, eating, drinking, working, loving, earning, thinking, reading, resting, deciding, then we are living the spiritual life. God comes into our lives not on Sunday only, not at the time of prayer only, not in some special place nor through some special form, but he is in it from start to finish and his spirit governs the whole process. "In Him we live and move and have our being." There are two ways of trying to diffuse the spirit of God through our lives. One is the way the Pharisees endeavored to do it, by covering every moment of the day and every single act with some form that actually

bore the name of God, some practice that literally carried the name of religion. The other is the way in which Jesus endeavored to accomplish it, by assuming God to be everywhere and always walking with Him.

There lingers with us still too much of the old notion that people are engaged in a number of things with which God has nothing to do, or at best has only a minor interest in them. These things include farming, mining, buying and selling, learning, and a number of similar things, everything in fact that a man does when he is not reading the Bible or engaged in prayer, or attending church. It is implied that God did not originally intend men to do these things at all. But people fell into the habit of farming and studying and working in iron and steel, building cities and developing a social system. God made the best of this state of affairs, "winked at them" as it were, "for the hardness of their hearts," and said, "Well, go ahead and do these things if you are bound to, but remember that these are side issues and the business of life is to build altars and make offerings and call upon the name of God."

One form of this notion appears in the feeling that God is hostile to science. All through religious literature there runs a more or less veiled scorn of what men can learn by hard mental application, as though astronomers,

geologists, biologists and other men of science were endeavoring to find out by stealth what God had intended that no one should know unless he chose to reveal it in a dream or vision to some chosen prophet, in the leaves of Sybils, in Delphic oracles, in sacred books. Laboratories, libraries, scientific expeditions are all regarded as more or less blasphemous.

Another form of this notion is seen in the traditional idea that marriage and family life and a natural participation in social affairs are purely human things, and not included in the original plan for those who really want to do God's will. But the man who lives in a cave, scantily clad, away from his kind, curbing all natural impulses and outreachings of the human heart, disregarding the demands of culture and civilization, stands on a higher plane. He is doing God's will. A somewhat humorous relic of this belief is preserved for us in the phrase, "The odor of sanctity," which goes back in its origin to monks whose piety was so strenuous that it included enmity to soap and water. They did not believe that "cleanliness is next to Godliness."

But how much better it is and how much nearer the truth to make all life divine, to erase altogether the old distinction between the divine and the human, between the things we think are peculiarly in charge of God and the things

that he has nothing to do with? This enables us to live a divine life always and in whatever we are doing. This makes the spiritual life simply the life of honesty and interest and sanity and good-will which is the logical result of faith in the indwelling spirit of God. Any man is living the life of the spirit when he is living in all his varied relationships after the manner and in the spirit of a genuinely good man. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God." The spiritual tone is not confined to men and women with pale cheeks and sunken chests who wear black clothes and who speak in an impressive voice, and often use the name of God, although there is nothing to be said against the custom of using the name of God often. But people with red blood and iron nerves and splendid health, and who are enjoying the world's work to the full may also have the spiritual tone. It is the man who is in tune with the world and with life who is the spiritual man.



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